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THE PUBLIC SQUARE
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Wrestling with Original Sin

Edward T. Oakes does an admirable job of addressing the three objections to the doctrine of original sin in "Original Sin: A Disputation" (November 1998). Moreover, Father Oakes' description of the consequences of dismissing original sin in favor of a utopian view of the perfectibility of human beings is remarkably lucid in light of human history, especially in this century.

Nevertheless, the relegation of Søren Kierkegaard to a mere footnote overlooks a thoughtful, coherent redefinition of the doctrine of original sin. Kierkegaard did not deny the reality of original sin, but he did deny the Augustinian explanation of the doctrine. Kierkegaard understood full well that human beings are not perfect and cannot achieve perfection. He mocked the utopian idealism of his own day in ways that seem almost prophetic. He knew that we are all slaves to sin, and cannot free ourselves from this bondage. But, he argued, this slavery does not result from an inherited, almost biological, flaw of human nature, passed down to us from Adam.

Instead, original sin is a condition infecting human society, and since all humans live in such a society, its effects are ultimately inescapable. For Kierkegaard, there is no such thing as a private sin. The things that we do affect not only ourselves but others. And, in affecting others, our actions gain a sort of momentum that spreads throughout society. There is not just one First Sin that is somehow qualitatively different from all others, but any number of first sins that are all very much alike and have far-reaching consequences.

Now, perhaps I misunderstand Kierkegaard, but it seems that this view of original sin also answers the same objections Oakes answers:

1. The idea that sin is a social event with far-reaching consequences is quite biblical, and is found in Genesis 3 as well as in numerous examples of the sins of the fathers being visited upon succeeding generations. It also does away with the problem of Augustine's presumed exegetical liberties with Romans 5, while seemingly reinforcing Paul's notion that sin entered the world through Adam and spread throughout the world.

2. Kierkegaard's view of original sin seems to fit nicely with what modern science, especially modern psychology and sociology, says about human behavior. Psychology notes the reciprocity of human interactions. Treat someone nicely, and he will probably return the favor. Treat that same person poorly, and he will likely respond in kind. Hence the necessity of the Golden Rule and the Decalogue. Sociology shows that humans can rationalize the transformation of bizarre, even immoral, forms of behavior into cultural norms that almost always appeal to the past for their justification. Hence the gay rights movement's proclivity to compare the plight of homosexuals to African-Americans under the yoke of slavery and Jim Crow.

3. Finally, and most positively, Kierkegaard's view disposes of the repugnant notion that, in Calvin's terms, even "infants bring their own damnation with them from their mothers' wombs; the moment they are born their natures are odious and abominable to God." This idea is not only repugnant, but contrary to Scripture, which teaches through the words of Jesus Christ that all people are loved by God rather than viewed with disgust and horror. As a Protestant who has heard from the pulpit many falsehoods about Catholicism, I find it disturbing that a Catholic writer would not be much more pointed in correcting the widespread misapprehension, often attributed to

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Catholicism, that asserts even babies will be damned to Hell.

We are imperfect creatures living in a gravely flawed society. In this situation, sin may be inevitable, but the first sin—everyone's original sin—results from his or her own choice. All sin is a conscious choice to do what is wrong.

Mark L. Chance
Houston, TX

I found Edward T. Oakes' article interesting and informative. However, I question his idea that death is not a consequence of original sin and that God did not create man in a state intended to be free from death. These positions can perhaps be validated by a scriptural/Augustinian critique. But as a Catholic, I (and Father Oakes too) have to take into consideration the teaching of the Church, and this seems to be quite contrary to Fr. Oakes on these points. I cite the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1008, and its reference to *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 18, and the Council of Trent's *de fide* statement, DS 1511. In the paragraph cited, *Gaudium et Spes* notes that "the Christian faith teaches that bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned, will be overcome when that wholeness which he has lost through his own fault will be given once again to him by the almighty and merciful Savior." I find this statement and the one from Trent impossible to square with Fr. Oakes on the original non-freedom of man from death, if I interpret him correctly.

Monsignor James B. Nugent
Columbus, OH

In the methodology and spirit of Thomas Aquinas, I offer the following thoughts.

Videtur quod: It would seem that humans are naturally good is not the case. Edward T. Oakes' article "Original Sin: A Disputation" does a masterful job of summarizing both sides of the discussion with a surprisingly evenhanded treatment. For those who listen to the authority of Scripture, he cites Psalm 51:5. But the case he makes for original sin wins the day as Father Oakes forces the reader to the realization that "original sin is the only way believers can make sense of the world." The necessity of this truth is buttressed with the observation that disastrous consequences follow when one accepts the opposing view that humanity is basically good. In light of reality, the nature of humanity must be essentially evil.

Sed contra: On the contrary, Fr. Oakes himself states, "No one now disputes that the Bible does not teach a doctrine of original sin as such." Furthermore, he points to the real problem, which is not whether our nature is either good or evil from birth, but the state of the world into which any given human is now born. "We are born . . . into a world where rebellion against God has already taken place, and the drift of it sweeps us along."

Respondeo: To all of the above, I respond as follows: The question of whether people are essentially evil or good assumes that the nature of humanity must be rooted in one of these two options. The question is a bad question. The question should be, "What is the basic nature of humanity?" Instead of describing mankind as being essentially either good or evil, Scripture depicts our basic nature both before and after the fall as being "made in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26,27; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9) as well as being composed of some combination of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Mark 14:38; Matthew 10:28).

I propose that the most natural interpretation of both Scripture and the reality we perceive is that each child is born, as a body, soul, and spirit made in the image of God, into a world already dominated by the effects of previous sinful generations. Then, with the dawn of his or her awareness between right and wrong, this young individual at some point chooses to do wrong, thus falling victim to the same cancerous plague dominating the rest of humanity. The results of sin's dominion are obvious. The good news, however, is that through the covenant offered by Jesus, one can be freed from sin and recreated to become a new man in Christ.

Ad primum: As for the first objection, not only does Fr. Oakes inadvertently admit that Psalm 51:5 does not teach original sin, but it seems likely that the Psalmist is using poetic hyperbole to express in the strongest language possible his utter disdain for his sin. The text does not reveal a statement about human nature, but the depth of David's remorse as he pictures his whole life being cloaked in sin. Such poetic deep remorse also finds expression in Job 3:1-19, where it is not the poet's realization of his sin that causes such dark ruminations but his recent traumatic life experiences.

Ad secundum: As for the second objection, Fr. Oakes' problem resides in identifying the wrong

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cause. Instead of attributing the sinful reality of this world to man's nature being essentially evil, Scripture attributes evil to that "spirit who is even now at work among the rebellious" (Ephesians 2:2). The sinfulness of this world is the result not of man possessing an essentially evil nature but of each one of us becoming and remaining dominated by sin.

Ad tertium: As to the third objection, Fr. Oakes is right. Crediting man as being essentially good does lead to disastrous consequences. However, this does not prove his point, since it is not the case of a strong disjunction: there is a third option.

Barry Newton
San Jose, CA

In order to rebut the argument against the doctrine of original sin, Edward T. Oakes makes the following remarkable statement: "It might sound intolerably paradoxical to say this, but it is precisely the very harm that sometimes comes from the doctrine of original sin that proves its validity." If one were to accept this argument, any number of heresies could be justified by the harm they do to their adherents.

Father Oakes admits that there is much that he did not include in this essay, but that his only objective was to demonstrate that "despite its obvious paradoxicality, it proves to be more illuminating of the human condition than its competitors." I thank him for his valiant effort. He did in fact demonstrate the weaknesses of several competing theories. However, showing that some of the other hypotheses are worse than the doctrine of original sin does not prove that the doctrine is true.

The doctrine of original sin as taught by Augustine is not the "only" doctrine that harmonizes the goodness of God with the evil in the world. The doctrine of original sin remains totally unsatisfying and unconvincing to thinking truth-seekers. The attempt to intimidate people into accepting this doctrine by saying that it is the very rudeness, mysteriousness, and incomprehensibility of the doctrine that proves its truthfulness is offensive and insulting. It reminds one of the dark ages when all access to the Scriptures was denied to the masses because it needed to be explained to them by those who understood the mysteries. Resorting to the doctrine's incomprehensibility is simply an admission that even its proponents cannot explain it or harmonize it with God's grace, mercy, and justice.

Jay R. Seaver
Longmont, CO

Edward T. Oakes concludes his interesting and scholarly review of the doctrine of original sin with the comment that "my only argument here, against the whole plausible array of arguments against the doctrine, is that, despite its obvious paradoxicality, it proves to be more illuminating of the human condition than its competitors."

Those old enough to wonder about original sin are told it has to do with something they have themselves observed in their own infant siblings, the infant's endless demand for attention. The youngsters are asked to ponder how many would survive infancy without the blessing of that primordial self-interest. The youngsters are then reminded of the great commandment that compels them for the rest of their lives to mitigate and manage that militant self-interest.

As a grandfather, it would be my simple suggestion to theologians that consideration be given to relabeling this perplexing human condition. Let us use a label for this foundational blessing/bane of life that rests on what our experience universally reveals it to be, namely, our radical self-centeredness—that lifesaving blessing of infancy become a thorn.

Father Oakes has established our need for the doctrine. There is great potential benefit in revisiting that need and characterizing it by a name that reveals the anatomy of its paradoxicality.

Angelo S. Miceli
Norris, TN

Edward T. Oakes replies:
First of all, I would like to thank the respondents for their intelligent and carefully phrased rejoinders to my "medieval disputation." The sharpness and intelligence of their replies confirms for me a long-held suspicion: the time is ripe for breathing new life into the old Thomistic format, for it is a method specifically designed to resolve seeming contradictions that lurk *within the tradition itself*. Thus what animated my article, at least distantly, was not so much the tension between Darwin and St. Augustine as it was the apparent irreconcilability in St. Paul between chapter 5 of his letter to the Romans and chapter 15 of his first letter to the Corinthians, with the former seeming to attribute mortality to sin and the latter to our nature as physical bodies. But what finally got me, most proximately, to write the article was my reading of Pope John Paul II's letter of October 1996 on evolution to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences just after I happened to have finished reading his Wednesday allocutions on Genesis from the early years of his papacy.

I rehearse this personal history here because my rejoinder to the five gentlemen above depends on understanding how the *disputatio* works; and unfortunately their letters, for all their intelligence, still fail in various ways to understand the format. Mark L. Chance takes exception to my quoting John Calvin (we have certainly come to a strange pass in ecumenical relations when a Protestant tells a Catholic writer that he is in danger of unleashing anti-Catholic prejudice by quoting, without invidious intent, John Calvin!). But the citation of Calvin occurred in the *Videtur quod* section, that is, in that part of the article outlining the argument I planned later to refute. True, I subsequently went on to defend the Puritans, but only from the charge that Calvin's view of God's wrath toward infants in any way warped their children. (In the first half of the twentieth century the Harvard historian Ralph

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Barton Perry proved that the Puritans, at least in Massachusetts, were remarkably loving to their children.)

Nor does the fact that I have "relegated" Kierkegaard to a mere footnote mean that I value Augustine over Kierkegaard, whatever that might mean. On the contrary, if I were to present an entire work on original sin I would have to highlight the contributions of this melancholy Dane and lonely Lutheran, as he—even more than Paul Ricoeur or Reinhold Niebuhr—has dealt with *the* central problem of the doctrine for modern Christians: how can Adam and Eve be understood as the first of a series when life, especially now, in the light of evolution, is understood as an unbroken continuum?

I would also have to draw upon Kierkegaard when the time came to treat the issue raised by Monsignor James B. Nugent, who seems to have fallen under the impression that my article denied the doctrine of what is known technically as Adam's prelapsarian immortality (which he rightly claims is defined *de fide* by the Council of Trent). But again, a closer look at the article will show that my arguments against that doctrine all occur in the *Videtur quod* section of the article. It is true that later, in the *Respondeo* section, I hold that Paul presumes the natural (biological) mortality of the body. But it is still perfectly possible to hold to Trent's affirmation of Adam's prelapsarian immortality while simultaneously affirming the natural mortality of the body, as Aquinas does when he says in the *Summa Theologiae* (II/II q.164, art.1, ad 1) that "death is both natural, on account of a condition attaching to matter, and penal, on account of the loss of Divine favor preserving man from death."

Thomas' argument here does not draw on St. Paul but on Aristotle's metaphysics of form (an eternal identity) and matter (which is inherently divisible and hence prone to death), whereas today we would probably stress the biological reality that every organism is a finite energy system requiring food as fuel to maintain the necessary energy to run the system, the processing of which leads eventually to the entropic "rusting" of the system, terminating in death.

Of course, as Msgr. Nugent notices, how one reconciles that reality with Trent's definition of Adam's prelapsarian immortality is the issue, to which I can offer only the most preliminary of answers. First of all, such a question can only be addressed far down the ramified structure of a medieval *summa*: the question makes no sense until other issues are first dealt with, primarily that of Adam's historicity.

Be that as it may, one possible solution was suggested by Karl Rahner in his book *Hominisation: The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem* and in some of his essays on Christian dying in his *Theological Investigations*, when he put forth the proposal that, had Adam not sinned, his (biological) death would have been experienced purely as a transition to God and not as it now is, as trauma. In fact, as Rahner also points out, the *denial* of the body's natural mortality is itself a heresy, one first propounded by Michael Baius (or Michel du Bay, as he is also known) whose dates (1513-1589) roughly correspond to Calvin's (1509-1564). Interestingly enough, Baius was a delegate to the Council of Trent in its last year (1563) but later insisted that Adam's prelapsarian immortality (the definition of which *de fide* he ardently supported) was a feature of Adam's very nature as a human being. Shortly thereafter, in 1567, Pope St. Pius V condemned this view in his bull *Ex Omnibus Afflictionibus* (DS 1955 and 1978): the Pope insisted that, contrary to Baius, death is not simply and purely a consequence of the guilt of sin, original or personal.

The Pope's grounds for this condemnation were not so much biological or Aristotelian as theological. As St. Athanasius had put it earlier in his treatise *On the Incarnation* (which St. Gregory of Nyssa later took up in the *Great Catechetical Oration*), God made the first human pair as the most gifted of *animals* and then conferred on them the ability to know and love Him, which brought in its wake a condign gift of immortality; but when the first humans lost their knowledge and love of God, they reverted to the animal state which was theirs by nature. (There is also the faintly amusing view of the second-century St. Irenaeus to consider; he held that Adam and Eve were not in Paradise more than five minutes before they committed the First Sin, which, even if Irenaeus meant his proposal to be taken semi-facetiously, certainly says something about the prelapsarian nature of our First Parents!)

Baius' problem was the same as Calvin's: he read Augustine without the benefit of Aquinas. For Augustine's real problem in his battle against the Pelagians was that he

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had no concept of the natural order of goodness independent of the ordinances of God; St. Thomas, however, had a much different concept of nature, so that he could talk about actions which are naturally good, though neither graced nor supernatural. And this distinction allowed him to make the further distinction that eluded Augustine, Baius, Bishop Jansenius, and (it would seem) Calvin: between death as punishment and death as natural.

In any event, to reassure Msgr. Nugent, I heartily support Pascal's view that the only man unhappy at not being a king is a deposed king —meaning, there is something in our sense of life in the presence of God that tells us that we are not meant for death, at least not this kind of death, with its fear of annihilation or (worse!) the judgment of God. As Jesus said to the Sadducees, who denied eternal life: When Jews call God "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," that must mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are in some (unspecified) sense still alive, since God is only a God of life, and never of death. And such I would hold also of our First Parents: God did not create them for death, for He could not do so, being entirely the God of life—however obviously all material things are by nature headed for dissolution.

Nonetheless, I hesitate to develop these proposals here at any (more) length, as any argument on this issue, to be convincing, would have to take place within a context where other issues—to which this is a very subordinate, subsidiary one —would first be resolved. Indeed, most contemporary solutions known to me, such as those of Rahner or of C. S. Lewis (in the third chapter of his *Problem of Pain*), seem to beg the question, "Who is Adam: the culmination of evolution or the first of a series?"

Trent no doubt assumed, along with all other authorities in the sixteenth century, that Adam's prelapsarian immortality was an implication not just of Romans 5 but also of his having been created fully formed as an adult, obviously a necessity in a narrative assuming a six-day creation. Needless to say, after Darwin and especially in the light of the Pope's letter on evolution, this whole question will have to be revisited, which is why I suspect Kierkegaard will in future generations be regarded as the most important theologian of the nineteenth century, Cardinal Newman excepted, for he is the first and still most important thinker to have addressed this question directly.

Barry Newton argues well for a "third option," one that does not fall into the trap either of affirming man's essential goodness or claiming him to be essentially evil. Unfortunately, he seems to labor under the assumption that my defense of the doctrine of original sin entails my claiming man to be essentially evil. Admittedly, this is the theological implication that some theologians (mostly of the Reformation) drew from the doctrine, especially Calvin.

But again, I must stress that just because I quote John Calvin without attacking him in the next breath does not mean that I hold to Calvinist doctrines. It is essential to the method adopted by both Mr. Newton and myself that one describe the opponent's position better than he had managed to do, which Mr. Newton has failed to do in my case. And to the extent that Mr. Newton goes on to defend the essential goodness of man (as he seems to do), I have an easy rejoinder: the record of human history in the twentieth century.

Jay R. Seaver has also failed to see the nature of my argument in context, for I do not defend the doctrine on the basis of its sheer paradoxicality. In fact I would hold that, barring other, more telling considerations, the sheer paradoxical nature of a doctrine would normally count against it. But if, in spite of a doctrine's paradoxicality, it illuminates more than any other alternative, that speaks in its favor. As G. K. Chesterton once put it: "Whenever we feel there is something odd in Christian theology, we shall generally find there is something odd in the truth."

Finally, I thank Angelo S. Miceli for his observations about infant behavior, insights which he shares with Augustine, who in his *Confessions* (I,7) seems to be the first observer, at least in writing, to have noticed the greed, jealousy, and rage of which the human infant is capable. By pointing out the survival advantages of the infant's relentless self-interest, Mr. Miceli raises a central dilemma that has yet to be addressed by contemporary theology in dealing with original sin: how do we reconcile evolution with Genesis? If these behaviors are not only advantageous but evolutionarily essential, how can they be regarded as products of sin, which entered history only at the moment of our First Parents and which in any event must be eschewed? This question, in essence, constitutes Nietzsche's central objection to

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Christian ethics and is one more reason why the issue of original sin needs the kind of "medieval" treatment which the five correspondents above have initiated with their intriguing questions.

Misplaced Nostalgia

Richard John Neuhaus turns nostalgic as he recalls his involvement in the antiwar movement of the 1960s ("Conservative Changes," Public Square, November 1998). He ponders the role of that movement in the outcome of the war and concludes by agreeing with the contention that the radicals at least "made the war stoppable." I believe there is abundant evidence to refute that conclusion, but there is another point that needs to be made.

When the United States went to war in the 1960s, the country needed men to answer its call to serve. Some men responded to that need, and some refused to answer. Those who refused not only turned their backs on their own country; they acted in ways that lent encouragement to her enemies.

To those men who fought and died in Vietnam, we owe all the honor that is due to the brave and the patriotic. Many of those men had the same doubts about the "rightness" of that war as did the radicals who stayed home. But to those who went, concepts such as duty to one's native land, sacrifice, and physical courage (which Aristotle calls the foremost of all virtues) meant something. Those men responded when needed and did not conveniently decide that it was time to pick and choose which of their country's wars they could support.

Henry Wingate
Madison, VA

A False Dichotomy

James Nuechterlein suggests a false but widely accepted dichotomy when he says of many in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod ("The Lutheran Prospect," November 1998) that our "rigorous doctrinal particularity" makes us "theologically serious" but also "indifferent to ecumenical involvement with other Christians"—as though zeal for true doctrine varied necessarily and inversely with zeal for ecumenism. This idea is foreign to the spirit of the early ecumenical councils, and its popularity today presents a big stumbling block to LCMS involvement in recent ecumenical proposals. Nevertheless, many if not most clergy in the LCMS view the Lutheran prospect in the same way Mr. Nuechterlein does. We are, like him, "committed to the distinctive Lutheran construal of the Christian faith" (i.e., rigorously particular about doctrine), but also "ecumenical in spirit." We simply don't share his view that doctrinal purity must compete with the spirit of ecumenism in the heart of a Christian.

(The Rev.) Peter Speckhard
Community of Faith
Lutheran Church
Spring Grove, IL

James Nuechterlein replies:
I do not in any way question Peter Speckhard's commitment both to theological rigor and to ecumenical engagement. But my own experience—and, I would argue, the history of the LCMS—brings into question his assumption that that dual commitment holds for "many if not most clergy" of the Missouri Synod.

Faith and Reason

While I might sympathize with Daniel P. Moloney's frustration ("Questioning Everything?" November 1998) vis-à-vis the arrogation of rationality by several prominent scientists, it is equally presumptuous for Christians to base their ethics upon reason ahead of faith. Reason is a tool; it is but a part of our humanity. It has a signal tendency to foster division in mankind. Faith, on the other hand, involves the whole man and his decision to submit to the will of the Creator. Secular and religious rationalism are, whether we like it or not, poised towards arrogance. Faith is poised toward communion and restoration. Thankfully, our salvation is not dependent upon how much we know or understand, or even upon how well we can argue, but rather on our attitude and predisposition to receive the free-will offering of God's grace. My sense is that the Church spends all too much time celebrating the faith and too little time living it out in love.

Finally, I am not intimidated by science. The best of it was and is a product of Christianity, as Karl Popper notes in *The Open Society and its Enemies.* He also pointed out that the spirit of science is that of Socrates, who was acutely aware of how much he did not know. Yes, "scientists make as many assumptions as the rest of us," some of them right, others wrong. However, they have little bearing upon the simple faith God has called us to.

Adrian Valentino
Fort Collins, CO

Daniel P. Moloney replies:
Adrian Valentino takes issue with my argument that "most traditional ethical principles are derivable from reason," suggesting that it is "presumptuous for Christians to base their ethics upon reason ahead of faith." I could not agree more. Christians should value very few things ahead of faith—charity and hope are about all that come to mind. Faith is necessary for salvation; scientific understanding is not. Yet if somebody has been given the relevant intellectual gifts, I think it would be a rejection of God's grace and the sin of burying one's talents were he not to use his reason to explore this wonderful world we have been given. Those who have eyes will see the reasonableness of much of ethics, I believe; they also will see the limits of human reason, which Mr. Valentino and I agree are legion.

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THIS TIME

Confessions of a Contrarian

James Nuechterlein

The production schedule of FT is such that copy for the current issue is due before the previous issue has reached our subscribers. Which means that as I write this, I have no way of knowing the reaction of readers to last month's column, "Punishment Yes, Impeachment No."

But I have a pretty good guess. Several people saw the column prior to publication (including, of course, my fellow editors) and I have made its argument to a number of others. The reaction has been little short of unanimous: the argument is wrong and I have gone soft in the head. (I picture in my mind myriads of readers nodding their heads in agreement.) At a gathering of conservative intellectuals in early December, for example, my proposal that President Clinton should be censured rather than removed from office brought responses that ranged from bemused skepticism to stern disapproval. Even my wife, whose support (or diplomatic silence) I can generally count on, has indicated her confusion over why, on this point, I have suddenly become a liberal wimp.

My intention here is not to defend or revisit my argument. (Except to regret the imprecision of my title: Impeachment of the President by the House of Representatives does not require the unambiguous expression of national will that, in my view, is necessary—and not now present—for his removal from office by the Senate.) I am interested rather in the circumstances of my situation. How is it, I ask myself, that I am so out of step with prevailing opinion? "Prevailing opinion" is, of course, a relative term. On the fate of Bill Clinton I am in tune—or so all the polls suggest—with the general public mood. It's my friends who think I'm crazy. That gives me pause.

I find on reflection that it is not unusual for me to be in the situation—if I may risk a cliché—of marching to a different drummer. That is a result not so much of a nonconformist disposition as of the circumstances that have marked my adult life. I have lived most of that time as a conservative surrounded by hosts of liberals, and that has made for marching out of step.

It began in graduate school. When I enrolled at Yale in the fall of 1960, the central preoccupation was the upcoming election between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. The only significant issue of debate among the graduate students was not over who should win—Nixon was unthinkable—but over the depth of Kennedy's commitment to liberalism. When a rumor spread that one of the most respected professors in the History Department, David M. Potter, favored Nixon, it became for weeks a topic of bewildered consternation. (I have no idea if the rumor was true.)

I made the mistake of suggesting, one memorable day over lunch at the Commons, that while I wasn't sure who I would vote for, I was leaning towards Nixon and that, in any case, given the few significant disagreements on policy between the candidates, it made little difference who won. I might as well have come out in favor of the plague. The outrage was immediate ("I suppose you supported Joe McCarthy too!") and within minutes people from surrounding tables came over to participate in the shaming exercise. The word *pariah* took on new resonance for me that day.

Things improved somewhat after I became a professor of American history at Queen's University in Canada in 1964. Few of my colleagues, to be sure, shared my political views, but, being Canadian, they were usually polite about it. (My sharpest exchanges were with fellow Americans on the faculty.) Debates got really hot only as the Vietnam war deepened and dragged on, and even then, compared to most U.S. campuses at the time, Queen's was an island of civility.

The otherness I felt in Canada came mostly from encountering ways of thought that were alien to me. My arrival at Queen's coincided with the publication of *Lament for a Nation,* by the Canadian philosopher George Grant. I read the book carefully—it caused an enormous stir in Canada—but found it difficult to come to grips with its argument. My problem was not that Grant's lament had to do with the Americanization of Canada: that, I learned virtually as soon as I crossed the border, was a staple concern of all Canadians. It was rather that his analysis combined intensely conservative cultural criticism with radically leftist political economy. For someone who had come of intellectual age in an era when political debate in America occurred almost entirely between varieties of liberalism, Grant's mixture of Burke and Marx was well-nigh inscrutable. As I told my students, "No American could have written this book." (Though later on, as liberalism's hegemony within American thought dissipated, social critics such as Christopher Lasch wrote in a manner that brought Grant to mind.)

Grant, I learned, was not unique among Canadians in his "Red Tory" way of thinking. In many heated debates in faculty meetings over the

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years, I found that my most regular allies on curricular issues were people who belonged to Canada's leftist New Democratic Party but who had not a taint of progressive sentiment when it came to educational standards. (They also, rather to my surprise, became my closest personal friends.) We fought some valiant battles, and even won on occasion, but more often than not we were in the distinct minority. The winning side was generally led by transplanted American liberals and by those Canadians who, though they would have furiously denied it, had willy-nilly absorbed the educational philosophy of John Dewey.

In 1981 I returned to the United States and my alma mater, Valparaiso University. My main duty there was editing the university's monthly journal of thought and opinion, the *Cresset*. Over the next seven and one-half years, under the heading *In Luce Tua*, I began each issue with a few pages of editorial opinion. It is safe to say that my views met with less than widespread approval, especially among my colleagues in the arts and science faculty. Valparaiso is, I am happy to report, less determinedly leftist than most American universities—but it is still an American university. I used to argue that, if nothing else, *In Luce Tua* was useful to the faculty as a kind of counter-guide to appropriate political thought. As had been the case in Canada, though, my colleagues' disapproval of my politics only rarely became personal.

Since 1989 I have been in (self-imposed) exile from academia. Not only that, but for the first time in my working life I am surrounded by people who think more or less the way I do. It seems I had to come to Manhattan, the center of left-liberal thought in America, to find a decent conservative community. No longer am I an outsider.

And yet my contrarian habits have not altogether left me. Every now and then—as on the question of whether Bill Clinton should be removed from office—I find myself significantly at odds with those with whom I am normally in agreement. It's partly habit, no doubt. All those years in almost constant opposition have inevitably left their mark. March out of step long enough and it becomes your natural cadence.

But I think it's more a matter of temperament. My habits of mind are thoroughly and consistently conservative. At the same time, I am cursed with an instinct for ambivalence. For any argument I entertain, counterarguments come immediately—and quite unbidden—to mind. I am never less sure of a position than when in the midst of people who are entirely sure of it. I like to think all this makes for balanced and independent judgments. Critics might think it indulgence in willful perversity.

In any case, it's a most untidy way to live an intellectual life. The only possible excuse for it is that life itself is most untidy. FT

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Opinion

Talking to Generation X

Sarah E. Hinlicky

We've never been proud to be Americans—our political memory stretches back only as far as Vietnam, Watergate, and Reaganomics. Our parents left religion and, perhaps not coincidentally, each other in unprecedented numbers. Failed ideologies were mother's milk to us: love didn't save the world, the Age of Aquarius brought no peace, sexual liberation brought us AIDS and legions of fatherless children, Marxism collapsed. We can't even imagine a world of cultural or national unity; our world is more like a tattered patchwork quilt. We have every little inconsequential thing, Nintendo 64s and homepages and cell phones, but not one important thing to believe in. We are the much-maligned Generation X: your mission is to get us back to church.

There's a problem in this project. Even though we share the same cultural background, not all members of my generation are alike. After all, it's not so easy to sum up the character of a group whose only certain common feature is age. Yet there's something to be said for such generalizations. So drawing on our commonality (in spite of our diversity) and the extraordinary presumption of youth, I present here a vision of what the Xers might say if they all banded together to tell you what might persuade them to reenter the fold.

My authority on this subject can be challenged because in one critical respect I am not part of the "we" in what follows. I do go to church and am utterly taken with "the Christian thing." But I know a lot of people of my generation who don't and aren't. So while I don't claim to be an expert (and am not sure what it would mean to be an expert on this subject), I'll presume to talk about "we" and "us" and ask the reader to accept it for what it's worth.

We know you've tried to get us to church. That's part of the problem. Many of your appeals have been carefully calculated for success, and that turns our collective stomach. Take worship, for instance. You may think that fashionably cutting-edge liturgies relate to us on our level, but the fact is, we can find better entertainment elsewhere. The same goes for anything else you term "contemporary." We see right through it: it's up-to-date for the sake of being up-to-date, and we're not impressed by the results. In any event, you're not doing us any favors by telling us we're so important that age-old prayers and devotions can be rewritten to suit our personal whims. We know intuitively that, in the cosmic scheme of things, the stakes are too high for that.

On the other hand, you shouldn't be excessively medieval and mysterious, either. Mystery works up to a point, but it's addictive, and once we get hooked on it, the Church won't be able to provide enough to support our habit. We'll turn instead (many of us already have) to Eastern gurus and ancient pagan pantheons to satisfy all the esoteric delights our souls might desire. The human lust for secret knowledge should not be underestimated and certainly not encouraged. The Church has fought against that gnostic impulse from the start: Christianity is explosively non-secretive, God enfleshed for everyone to see, the light shining in the darkness. We're much too comfortable alone in the dark; we need the light to shake us up.

Then, of course, there is the matter of telling us that the Church possesses the Absolute Truth. Gen Xers doubt the very existence of such Truth with a capital T. We're much more comfortable with the idea of a multiplicity of little truths than one single unifying truth. But even if universal truth *does* exist, we are extremely skeptical that you—or anyone else—can possess it. Admittedly, this skepticism is a bit puerile. All the more reason not to use "the Truth" as the basis for evangelizing us, because it will backfire. And when your evangelizing attempts do fail, don't let the word "Hell" cross your lips. That's another thing we don't believe in.

As you can see, Generation Xers are a strangely complicated and self-contradictory bunch. Torn between rigid scientific doubt on the one hand and irrational credulity toward the supernatural on the other, we tend to have a generalized belief in God but are doubtful of his personal concern for us. It often sounds to us like the Church preaches two Gods, one of law and another of love. The first punishes sins (though we see evildoers get away with murder) while the second babysits his flock (but there's too much suffering for us to buy that, either). We refuse God's judgments, yet judge our parents harshly by canons in which hypocrisy is the only capital crime. And anything that smacks of the Establishment (a hangup inherited from our Boomer parents) elicits nothing but our contempt. The Establishment purports to be for the greater good, but what has the greater good ever done for us? Each of us is the center of his or her own universe, and so we abhor any kind of coercion, no matter how gentle, socially beneficial, or genuinely correct. In our eyes, the Church's

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standards of orthodoxy and behavior are as coercive as the government's laws. Both seem to be convenient vehicles for affirming preconceived notions, whether the narrow-minded judgments of parochial middle America or the social agendas of trendy leftists. We see complicity in the Church where you want us to see stability, moralism where you want us to see righteousness. The ultimate difference is that where you see the City of God we see only the City of Man.

Our stumbling block is Christianity presented as panacea. You're right that we are looking for healing, and usually in all the wrong places. When we're at our worst, we turn to drugs to numb the pain, cure the boredom, and escape the nothingness that haunts our lives. At our best we try alternative medicine, psychology, meditation, yoga, diets and exercise, successful careers, or falling in love. We invest ourselves in these things, and they inevitably fail. Which is what we expected anyway. We have learned that nothing can be trusted, so we've given up on trust altogether. Don't tell us that the Church can be trusted because, frankly, we doubt it. Don't tell us Christianity is the answer to our problems, because nothing but death will take them away. (Ever wonder why our suicide rate is so high?)

So you're in quite a pickle: you can't tell us that the Church has "the Truth," and we know that the Church won't miraculously cure us of our misery. What do you have left to persuade us? One thing: the story. We are story people. We know narratives, not ideas. Our surrogate parents were the TV and the VCR, and we can spew out entertainment trivia at the drop of a hat. We treat our ennui with stories, more and more stories, because they're the only things that make sense; when the external stories fail, we make a story of our own lives. You wonder why we're so self-destructive, but we're looking for the one story with staying power, the destruction and redemption of our own lives. That's to your advantage: you have the best redemption story on the market.

Perhaps the only thing you can do, then, is to point us towards Golgotha, a story that we can make sense of. Show us the women who wept and loved the Lord but couldn't change his fate. Remind us that Peter, the rock of the Church, denied the Messiah three times. Tell us that Pilate washed his hands of the truth, something we are often tempted to do. Mostly, though, turn us towards God hanging on the cross. That is what the world does to the holy. Where the cities of God and Man intersect, there is a crucifixion. The best-laid plans are swept aside; the blueprints for the perfect society are divided among the spoilers. We recognize this world: ripped from the start by our parents' divorces, spoiled by our own bad choices, threatened by war and poverty, pain and meaninglessness. Ours is a world where inconvenient lives are aborted and inconvenient loves are abandoned. We know all too well that we, too, would betray the only one who could save us.

One more thing. In our world where the stakes are high, remind us that all hope is not lost. As Christians you worship not at the time of the crucifixion, but Sunday morning at the resurrection. Tell us that the lives we lead now are redeemed, and that the Church, for all her flaws, is the bearer of this redemption. A story needs a storyteller, and it is the Church alone that tells the story of salvation. Here in the Church is where the cities of Man and God meet, and that is why all the real spiritual battles, the most exciting adventure stories, begin here. We know that death will continue to break our hearts and our bodies, but it's not the end of the story. Because of all the stories competing for our attention, the story of the City of God is the only one worth living, and dying, for.

SARAH E. HINLICKY *is an Editorial Assistant at* FIRST THINGS.

In Response to Terror

James Turner Johnson

In the aftermath of the United States military response to the car-bombing of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last August, New York's John Cardinal O'Connor drew a distinction between ad hoc, after-the-fact moral judgments about such particular responses to terrorism and a serious national effort to add a moral dimension to policy and military planning for future efforts against terrorist activities. "I would hope," wrote Cardinal O'Connor, "that if our government has not yet done so, it would appeal to scholars of the moral dimensions of warfare to offer their analyses of what we seem to be about as a nation" in responding to terrorism.

There is significant precedent for doing this. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, in response to the terror bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut and the growth of terrorist threats to Americans at home and abroad, the U.S. military made a series of efforts to bring moral philosophers and theologians into dialogue with the military officers and civilians involved in policy planning or holding command responsibility. The Naval War College and the Army War College took the lead in this, each providing the venue for various events aiming at such dialogue. Over time the focus shifted to a broader context, culminating in a conference on legal and moral constraints on low-intensity conflict held at the Naval

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War College in 1992 and the publication of a book in an NWC-sponsored series three years later. The dialogue carried on in this way has, however, not been continued since.

We need to renew these conversations. In dealing with terrorism and with international affairs in general, the seven years from 1992 to the present is a long time. Policies go out of date; personnel charged with interpreting and implementing them change; the shape of military readiness alters; the sources and nature of terrorist threats shift. Indeed, while Cardinal O'Connor is right to call special attention to the need for the government to initiate such a dialogue, the discussion should be broadened to include the American people as a whole. In a democracy such as ours, informed public support is a necessity for any effective policy. It is especially important to have such support for action against terrorists, because of the moral complexity and public nature of terrorism and counterterrorism.

No doubt some Americans are inclined to say that in the war against terrorism, anything goes. Understandable as this is when Americans, Kenyans, and Tanzanians are blown apart by car bombs, it is not the attitude Americans should take toward the struggle against terrorism. Such an attitude is in fact the mirror image of Osama bin Laden's declaration, contrary to the normative traditions of Islam, that all Americans are equally worthy to be targeted in his putative holy war against the U.S. A judgment that "anything goes" in dealing with him and other terrorists would equally violate our society's own normative traditions.

Like Cardinal O'Connor, I would argue that the reference point for thinking morally about responses to terrorism should be the just war tradition. This tradition is the collective record of Western culture's attempt to think morally about the use of military force in the service of an orderly, just, and peaceful world, and its influence can be seen broadly in recent debate. The issue is how this tradition is relevant to the problem of responding to terrorist activities.

For a war to be just, Thomas Aquinas argued, three things are necessary: sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention. Even today these concerns remain central. The requirement of *sovereign authority* in Thomas and throughout just war thought speaks to two issues. First, it means that the resort to force must be undertaken as a public act, on behalf of a political community that has been wronged in some serious way. Second, it means that there is no superior authority to which a wronged party can appeal to receive justice and settle a dispute. One can find these considerations behind the right under contemporary international law to use force in self-defense against armed attack. Put simply, any country targeted by terrorist acts is justified in a military response, both morally and by the terms of international law.

But Thomas also brought into focus a specific concern of his own time, one raised today by the phenomenon of terrorism: the obligation of every sovereign authority to curb and punish lawless people who strike at the order, justice, and peace that are the core purpose of political community. Terrorism by its nature aims to undermine and erode these goods and thus attacks all people who benefit from them. While the tradition has allowed for the possibility of a war between two states both seeming, because of the complexity of the issues involved, to be just, the kind of violence we today call terrorism is evil in its very nature, because it attacks the foundations of political community itself. The authority to use force to curb and punish terrorism is thus the same authority that seeks to protect the goods of the political order as such. There is no justice in terrorism, only injustice.

In just war terms, there is *just cause* when force is used to defend against attack, to retake something wrongly taken, or to punish evil. Much recent moral thought has focused on only one of these, the use of force in defense. Contemporary international law also has restricted the allowable use of force to self-defense, but in response to the realities of international order the customary behavior of states has effectively expanded the idea of defense to include the other traditional justifications. It is not necessary when thinking morally (or legally) about the use of force in counterterrorism to restrict such force to after-the-fact response to particular violent acts; nor is it necessary to deal with terrorist activities on a tit-for-tat basis, though the use of force would be justified in such cases. Let me be clear: a strategy that involves the use of military force to prevent terrorist acts is just and moral.

Right intention, in historical just war theory, had both a negative and a positive meaning. Negatively it meant the avoidance of the desire to bully or dominate, to take something for one's own benefit, to inflict harm out of hatred or what Augustine called "implacable animosity." While the moral requirement of right intention cautions U.S. policymakers not to fashion uses of force against terrorism that amount to riding roughshod over other states and peoples, it also draws attention to the fact that frequently terrorist self-justifications give evidence of a fundamental hatred for all that is American—an "implacable animosity."

Positively, the just war requirement of right intention historically meant that use of military force should aim at restoring or creating a just peace. Contemporary theorists typically count peace separately, rather than folding it into right intention. However this concept is conceived theoretically, it is fundamental to the formation of moral policy in thinking about how to deal with terrorism, whether by mili-

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tary or other means. One problem with ad hoc, after-the-fact, tit-for-tat reactions to particular terrorist acts is that in themselves they look backwards to those acts, not forward to the establishment of a just and well-ordered peace in which terrorism no longer threatens. How to conceive and bring about such a peace is, indeed, the greatest challenge for a policy against terrorism.

Thinking about terrorism in just war terms requires taking certain prudential concerns into account: Is the good accomplished proportional to the means used? Are there any other means of dealing with the problem that have a reasonable prospect of succeeding? Is there a reasonable hope of success? Both historically and logically, these concerns are secondary to those termed "necessary"; yet they are nonetheless important additional guidelines for moral policy and decisions regarding potential uses of force. In particular, these prudential criteria remind us that the use of military force is neither the preferred nor the only option for dealing with terrorism. As awesome a weapon as the cruise missile is, for example, its availability does not diminish the importance of other weapons in the struggle against terrorism: policies aimed at cutting off terrorist capabilities, removing their support, eliminating conditions in which they tend to flourish, gathering and sharing intelligence about individual terrorists and terrorist organizations, and bringing them to justice. A moral policy on dealing with terrorism should incorporate such approaches along with the possibility of resort to military force.

Justified force, if used, should directly and intentionally target only the guilty, and the means used should be such as to avoid harm to others so far as possible. Michael Walzer has it right, I believe, in arguing that the moral principles governing the use of force imply a special care to protect innocent parties from "collateral damage" due to force aimed at the guilty. Since it is a preferred tactic of terrorists to shelter themselves among innocent people and to use the fabric of normal life as a cover for their own activities, this is a particular problem for any policy against terrorism, and it may be the hardest to resolve. For—as Walzer makes plain—the effort to avoid harm to the innocent may require taking more potential danger onto oneself. The most moral military approach against terrorists may require risking the lives of American military personnel and accepting the losses that may come of this. This is not to argue that counterterrorist policy should focus on commando raids and larger military expeditions in preference to cruise missile strikes; rather, it is to say that a morally adequate policy for dealing with terrorism cannot be limited only to the relatively easy options.

The actual contours of moral debate over policy on dealing with the ongoing problem of terrorism remain to be determined. Like Cardinal O'Connor, I believe we should carry on that debate with the purpose of shaping policy that is adequate morally as well as politically and militarily. Moral reflection is not doing its job when it is employed only in retrospect, in response to particular terrorist acts.

JAMES TURNER JOHNSON *is Professor of Religion at Rutgers University.*

Eroticism Unbound

Daniel P. Moloney

Take out your keys and look at your key chain. Are you thinking about sex now?

I ask this question because of something I read on a recent trip up to Yale. To explain the dangers of smoking, the University had put on a "Healthy Lung Fair" where students were shown pictures of diseased lungs and were offered anti-smoking materials. I laughed when I read about the fair in the Yale *Daily News*—primary education has failed my generation in many respects, but everybody knows that smoking may be hazardous to your health. Smokers have a vice, not a lack of knowledge; as one student told the *Daily News*, "When I am under a lot of stress, I'm going to smoke anyway." Nevertheless, the organizers of the fair did their best to spread the bad news about cigarettes, even offering little trinkets bearing anti-tobacco messages that might, they hoped, cause some student to think twice before lighting up.

In paragraph three of the story, the reporter lists among the items being given away at the Healthy Lung Fair "paddle balls, condoms on key rings, and frisbees." Clearly neither the reporter nor the event's organizers saw any significance in the juxtaposition of these items. But let's reflect for a minute. Condoms are used for things sexual. Key rings usually are not. Neither are frisbees or paddle balls. A condom on a key ring would seem out of place, like a dog with a wristwatch or a tube of toothpaste attached to a coin purse. Let alone a condom on a key ring with anti-smoking messages on it. Yet at Yale, and undoubtedly on campuses everywhere, it is literally unremarkable. Unlock your car, have safe sex, and don't smoke!

The article continues, "Less popular, however, were the circular rubber jar openers that look like dental dams." A dental dam is a sort of female condom, used for kinky activities. Its very existence might be news to some, but not to Yalies, the reporter assumes. For if we notice the structure of this sen-

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tence, we see that the jar opener is described *in terms of* the dental dam! Dental dams are supposed to be more widely recognizable to students at Yale than are the little pieces of rubber that help one get a better grip on a tightly sealed jar. The jar openers are found in supermarkets and dime stores. Dental dams are not. Yet the reporter, looking for an easy way to describe these items found throughout suburban America, blithely wrote that they "look like dental dams." Open a jar, have kinky sex, don't smoke, let's play frisbee!

It was against this background that I first felt sympathy for the Yale Four, the Orthodox Jewish students whose religious objections to living on campus their freshman and sophomore years led them into a legal battle with the University. My original response to their lawsuit was typical among conservatives: broadly sympathetic to their complaints about student immorality, but not at all sympathetic to their lawsuit. Yale is a private university, and has the right to use its property as it desires. The students knew its rules ahead of time, so if they wanted to avoid this "injustice," they could save the $30,000 annual price tag and go someplace else. If Yale wants to stand for something, it ought to be given more latitude than is the State of Connecticut, because people do not have to obey its rules. On this matter, I roughly agreed with Stephen L. Carter, the noted church-state scholar at Yale Law School who argued the students' case before University officials. Yale had the right to behave as it did, Carter claimed. It was just wrong to do so. "If you are going to have a university and say that everybody can come," Carter told the Yale *Herald*, "you have to work harder to accommodate students." "Suppose that under your religion, you have certain dietary restrictions and can't eat in the dining hall. Yale should not charge you for your food. [Similarly,] Yale should not charge them for this service their religion forbids them to use."

I thought justice was served when the United States District Court dismissed the students' lawsuit last August. As I read about the Healthy Lung Fair, though, I realized that I had framed the case in the wrong terms. This was not about a private university refusing to accommodate a seemingly exotic requirement of certain very pious Jews. It was about large numbers of young people living in one of the most morally confusing situations imaginable. Sex does not belong in every context. It belongs in a very few, well-demarcated contexts in fact. Like many colleges and universities, though, Yale has decontextualized the erotic.

The Yale Four complained inter alia that many of Yale's residential colleges had coed bathrooms, which necessarily imply the sort of sexual immodesty the students' religious beliefs require them to avoid. My religion is quiet on this matter, but I agree with the motivation behind this prohibition, the old idea that one should not covet one's neighbor. If a young man fails to be aroused by a young woman wearing only a towel or showering in the next stall, he must either be dead or deluded.

In her engaging new book, *A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue*, Wendy Shalit puts her finger on this point. The idea that sex belongs only in restricted contexts occurred to her when she noticed that among certain Orthodox Jews unmarried women and men would not touch each other—no physical contact at all—even when engaged. Despite keeping their distance, they had big smiles and a twinkle in their eyes. This attracted and intrigued Shalit, so she began to ponder the virtues of this tradition. When she looked around at her classmates at Williams, she noticed that not only were they not keeping their distance, they were not happy either. After seeing the positive results of traditional Jewish modesty laws, and the negative results of excessive immodesty, she tried to find a connection between modesty and happiness. Her conclusions led her to question the entire relationship between the sexes at Williams, starting with an eventually successful lobbying effort against coed bathrooms.

The idea behind coed bathrooms is the same as the idea behind coed colleges, only taken much further. Young men and women, we are told, can work, eat, and live in close proximity with nary an erotic thought. Shalit collects a number of tremendously funny quotations from people who claim they are not aroused by the most intimate encounters with someone of the opposite sex. Boy and girl sharing a sleeping bag? Nudist colonies? Coed wrestling? "This is not sexual for me at all," they keep claiming, which makes Shalit wonder about her own mind. "Somehow, for assuming that there was anything sexual about a nice young man and a nice young woman just rolling around together on the floor and pinning each other down for sport, I was made to feel that *I* had the dirty mind. Here they were just trying to get some good clean exercise, and I had to go and . . . make it into something perverted." Shalit's point, with its own ingenuous twinkle, is that if we ignore the protests that "this is not sexual," we'll see that it probably is.

Yale students don't blink at the ubiquitous sexualization of their environment because they truly believe that it isn't sexual for them at all. By removing all the restraints on the erotic lives of students, the administration has turned Yale into a place where everything is eroticized yet nothing is really sexy. Male and female students shower in neighboring stalls, carry condoms on key rings, and allude to kinky sex without realizing it. Women dress in men's boxers and V-neck undershirts, at once revealing and slovenly. Why dress up for class when everybody has seen you before you showered? Nobody goes out on dates, yet nobody is a virgin either. Girls

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develop eating disorders, while guys complain that the girls are unattractive. Both worry about date rape, because nobody knows what is permitted and what is not. Sex has become like a football field without any lines; sure, you can't step out of bounds, but it is not clear how to play the game anymore.

The pervasive eroticism at Yale and other campuses forces the students to detach themselves from their natural inclinations. Shalit notes of her Williams classmates that "for all their experience, in some fundamental way they were prudes, because they were blind to the power of sex." "They were 'mature,' which is to say, emotionally detached, but that meant they were essentially clinical about things that to me would seem extremely intriguing and occupy my imagination for hours."

If the students reacted normally to their eroticized environment, their imaginations *would* be occupied for hours by thoughts of Suzy showering in the next stall or what the literature professor thought Lady Macbeth was *really* doing. So instead they tune out the sexual dimension to their surroundings. This survival reflex, though, confuses them when they try to begin a romantic relationship. They want all the natural impulses to kick in, but those impulses cannot be allowed to overcome the clinical detachment that gets them through the day. So they engage in oddly disengaged relationships, usually with a significant sexual component. Instead of going on dates, for example, students hang out in each other's rooms; a bit of alcohol in that setting and you have the beginning of the typical relationship. When the new couple fight, they stop sleeping together; when they break up, they still hang out in each other's rooms. In thirty years we have gone from single-sex colleges to coed bathrooms, and frequently (though unofficially) to coed dorm rooms. Perhaps the Yale Four are on to something.

Whenever men and women meet, they need to put their erotic relationships in some sort of context. In an earlier era, society divided unmarried men and women into substantially different spheres, so that a woman remained in her father's home until she moved into her husband's home (the principle goes back as far as Genesis). Anyone who saw Michael Corleone court his Sicilian bride in *The Godfather* knows that as late as this century in the more traditional parts of Europe an unmarried man and woman were not permitted to be alone with each other. Such radical social separation between men and women is impossible today, a casualty of (appropriate) feminist consciousness raising. Except for the fumbling legalisms of sexual harassment codes, however, the old erotic boundaries have not been replaced by new ones. While the more conservative business world is just beginning to feel uncomfortable about the resulting confusion, our colleges have been living for years with eroticism unbound.

Even conservative religious colleges with single-sex dormitories and rules about fraternization—Thomas Aquinas College in California, for example—cannot keep students from sleeping together. Purely external restraints cannot altogether eliminate eroticism from every encounter between men and women (nor would that be desirable). On the other hand, we cannot rely simply on internal disciplines such as guarding the eyes, suppressing the imagination, or remembering that "No means No." Young men will notice a nearby attractive and scantily clad woman no matter how hard they try to look elsewhere. Indeed, the more they struggle internally against it, the more they will notice the eroticism of the environment and allow it "to occupy their imagination for hours." Internal discipline, though necessary, requires some amount of social restraint on sexuality, beginning with modesty in dress and manners, discretion in conversation, and an absolute rejection of pornography. But first we need to recognize that the culture wars are not about whether sex is good or bad, but about whether it has its proper time and place.

A condom on a key ring makes even sex banal, just one gloomy consequence of eroticism without bounds.

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Nominal Babies

Richard Stith

In its famous 1973 decision *Roe v. Wade*, the United States Supreme Court mandated elective abortion up to viability, and abortion for broadly defined "health" reasons (i.e., virtually elective abortion) thereafter. That opinion contains a deep contradiction that can be understood as a conflict between what I will call "nominalism" and "realism." The Court asserts in effect that the unborn child has no real nature, that what it is is solely a matter of conventions concerning names (*nomina* in Latin). Yet the moment of birth is assumed to mark an essential difference, a real (not merely conventional) transition to a living entity, human in nature.

In the past twenty-five years, this "birth wall" has been largely dismantled or, to use appropriately the more fashionable expression, "deconstructed." That is, the purely nominal character of the birth difference has become increasingly accepted by those on both sides of the abortion debate. My purpose here is to elucidate this shift and to show the possibilities and perils of our emerging legal world.

Roe's nominalism can be seen most simply in Justice Harry Blackmun's well-known assertion that the Justices "need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins" in order to justify the Court's requirement that legislators treat the fetus at most as "the potentiality of human life" right up to the moment of birth. There is no need, he says, to answer this question because the diversity of answers given by others shows the question to be unanswerable, at least at present. But surely the law may take controvertible stands, and it may seek to minimize the possible harm of error even where it has no access to truth. Blackmun's insistence that what we call the fetus does not matter seems to imply a much more radical agnosticism: the assumption that the names we give to pre-born human beings are wholly conventional, that one can in principle never say that abortion *really* takes a human life.

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Blackmun's justificatory history of permissive abortion practices bears out this appearance of deep-seated nominalism. Let me explain. In order to decide whether or not practices of past ages can be justified today, we ought to look not only at the practices themselves (e.g., practices permitting abortion), but also at the beliefs about values and facts upon which those practices were based. If those underlying values now seem to us quite mistaken, the practices arising from those beliefs hold no authority for us today. Similarly, we cannot honestly invoke the authority of past scientific conclusions if we now see that the data upon which the conclusions were based were incomplete or mistaken. If we seek to know what is real, we cannot rest content with labels. We have to inquire into reasons.

Yet throughout Justice Blackmun's lengthy surveys of past practices allowing abortion, he never once asks whether or not the beliefs upon which those practices were based are in fact ones that he considers admirable or accurate. (By contrast, by the way, he occasionally does try to refute past reasons for *restricting* abortion—such as to protect the mother's life.)

For example, Blackmun refers often to "quickening" as a popular dividing line, without once mentioning that modern medical knowledge shows this "event," as he calls it, to be an illusion. The overall impression Blackmun gives is that whether and when abortion is allowed is an open choice, with most cultures voting for abortion.

At the same time, Blackmun suggests (without exactly stating) that birth makes a real difference. Such a claim is implicit in his refusal to find that constitu-

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tional personhood or actual human life begins "before live birth." In any event, Justice John Paul Stevens, writing thirteen years later in support of *Roe v. Wade*, makes clear the necessity of what I have here called "the birth wall." Concurring in *Thornburgh v. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists* (1986), he insists that "there is a fundamental and well-recognized difference between a fetus and a human being; indeed, if there is not such a difference, the permissibility of terminating the life of a fetus could scarcely be left to the will of the state legislatures." In the next sentence, Stevens makes clear that, in his view, even "the nine-month-gestated, fully sentient fetus on the eve of birth" is not yet a human being.

Stevens gives no explanation for his claim that a fundamental change at birth is required in order to justify legal abortion. But one basis for his view is surely the principle of human equality that underlies both our ethics and our law. There must be a real and deep difference between human and nonhuman entities in order to give force and limit to the normative demand for equal protection for all humans. If any and all entities could be defined at will into or out of humanity, human equality would have no practical significance. Insofar as human equality does make practical demands on us, it follows that we are politically committed to ontological realism. Stevens has to claim that a fetus and an infant are different kinds of beings in order to avoid recognizing an equal right to life before and after birth. Only if expulsion from the womb gives the fetus a human nature for the first time is late-term abortion easily justified.

We are thus bequeathed a curious antinomy by *Roe*. We are to presume that the unborn child or fetus has no inner nature of its own. What it is called is a matter of convention or preference, for it is not "really" anything at all. At the same time, we must assume that birth is a bright line, a moment when (in reality not merely in convention), by leaving the uterus, the fetus becomes undeniably one of us. In other words, we are to be skeptical nominalists prior to birth, but credulous realists about birth itself.

It should be obvious, even to Stevens, that the notion of a clear, fundamental difference at birth is not, shall we say, viable. The many postmodern nominalists among us (especially among academics) can hardly be expected to accept the mere assertion that a bright line between human and nonhuman exists at birth. If definition in principle is social construction, Stevens' definition of humanity will inevitably be deconstructed by those who have the political will to do so—i.e., those interested in protecting the unborn or in justifying infanticide (of which more below).

But even realists must in the end reject the birth-wall thesis, because it claims that what something is depends upon where it is. It makes the fundamental nature of the perinatal entity depend solely upon location. But location cannot determine a being's inner nature, though location may well affect how that being functions for others and thus affect what they name it. That is, the jurisprudence of Blackmun and Stevens abjures the search for the nature of the fetus prior to birth, where a realist would search it out, while relying on a form of naive realism about birth itself, where the fetus/infant difference cannot be more than nominal. Blackmun and Stevens would have us believe the child born prematurely at seven months to be a human being, while its more developed cousin in the womb overdue at nine and a half months is still a creature without a fundamentally human nature. Without an appeal to some supernatural change such as the insertion of a soul at first breath, an appeal which neither judge makes nor constitutionally could make, such a belief is quite simply absurd, beyond the limits of even the most extreme credulity.

The absurdity of the birth wall has not caused it to fall entirely. The Supreme Court in fact reaffirmed *Roe v. Wade* in 1992 in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, but it did so without claiming that birth *really* makes a difference, explicitly avoiding any claim that *Roe* was rightly decided in the first place. Instead, *Casey* based the right to abort in large measure on *stare decisis*, binding precedent, which is in *Casey* a doctrine of court vanity and positivism. Past decisions cannot be overturned just because they were based on fallacious reasoning. Fidelity to the Constitution is not by itself a sufficient reason to right old wrongs. Only on the basis of new information not available to the earlier Court can erroneous holdings be overruled. Except in such circumstances, to correct past mistakes would undermine the Supreme Court's prestige, *Casey* argued, particularly so on matters of great controversy. The abortion *fiat* stands, but only as such. Not willing to deny (or even explicitly to consider) that millions of actual human lives are being lost under *Roe*, *Casey* says simply that the Court has spoken, *causa finita est.*

Referring to "the interest of the State in the protection of 'potential life,'" also characterized as "a legitimate interest in promoting the life or potential life of the unborn," the outcome-determinative opinion of Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy, and David Souter declared in sum:

> We do not need to say whether each of us, had we been members of the Court when the valuation of the state interest came before it as an original matter, would have concluded, as the *Roe* Court did, that its weight is insufficient to justify a ban on abortions prior to viability even when it is subject to certain exceptions. The matter is not before us in the first instance, and coming as it does after nearly twenty years of lit-

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> igation in *Roe*'s wake we are satisfied that the immediate question is not the soundness of *Roe*'s resolution of the issue, but the precedential force that must be accorded to its holding.

There is good news and bad news in *Casey*'s doubts about *Roe*. The good news is that, since the Court no longer assumes that a magical change comes about at birth, the unchanging identity of the child before and after birth can be affirmed in law—provided always that the ultimate right to abortion be preserved. Postnatal realism can begin to replace prenatal nominalism. If the child has real dignity outside the womb, it must have dignity inside—since location cannot make an essential difference. Again in the words of O'Connor, Kennedy, and Souter: "Regulations which do no more than create a structural mechanism by which the State . . . may express profound respect for the life of the unborn are permitted, if they are not a substantial obstacle to the woman's exercise of the right to choose." For example, laws requiring a woman contemplating abortion to be fully informed about the procedure, including what it does to the fetus, were declared constitutional by *Casey* (overruling a contrary 1983 holding that had read *Roe* to forbid state attempts to dissuade women from having abortions).

Even in the earliest stages of pregnancy, a state may enact rules and regulations designed to encourage women to know that there are philosophic and social arguments of great weight that can be brought to bear in favor of continuing the pregnancy to full term: "Measures aimed at ensuring that a woman's choice contemplates the consequences for the fetus do not necessarily interfere with the right recognized in *Roe*."

Though it sometimes still uses the opaque and demeaning phrase "potential life" (along with "life" and "child") for the living human fetus, the *Casey* decision clearly permits state anti-abortion laws to be motivated by the "legitimate goal of protecting the life of the unborn," so long as their purpose remains "to persuade the woman to choose childbirth" rather than forcibly to stop her from choosing abortion. Indeed, already in the 1989 *Webster* case, the birth distinction had weakened to the point where the Court upheld Missouri legislation requiring that the unborn child, from the moment of conception, be treated as a legal person except insofar as the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court might otherwise require.

In addition to informed consent, *Casey* approves a twenty-four-hour period of reflection between the time the pregnant woman is given the required information and the actual abortion. But *Casey*'s persuade-but-do-not-actually-block principle need not stop there. After that case was decided, for example, Pennsylvania initiated a system of state subsidies for (nonreligious, of course) pro-life crisis pregnancy centers, the sort that had previously subsisted almost solely on private contributions and volunteers. And if women already in a crisis pregnancy can be given accurate factual information intended to encourage them to choose life, why not public high school students, even as part of a required curriculum? Such information may well be more effectively integrated into decision-making if it is provided prior to a pregnancy-induced sense of desperation. Just such an educational initiative appears to be beginning in Florida.

Where the Court-declared constitutional right to abortion is not even peripherally at issue, the Supreme Court has been still more indulgent regarding state action designed to protect unborn human beings. Just recently, for example, it refused to review the South Carolina Supreme Court's decision upholding a statute punishing drug use by pregnant women as a form of "child endangerment." And at no point post-*Roe* has the U.S. Supreme Court ever struck down any of the laws, now found in the majority of states, that punish the killing of a fetus whenever the killing is done without the mother's permission. In Minnesota today, an assailant who intentionally destroys a just-conceived human embryo—by battering its mother, for example—can be sentenced to life in prison for "murder of an unborn child," even if the woman was on her way to an abortion clinic at the time.

The "good news," then, is that *Roe*'s never-absolute birth wall was partially dismantled by the *Casey* decision, permitting greater recognition and protection for the child prior to birth. *Roe*'s postnatal realism has begun, to a degree, to displace its prenatal nominalism.

The "bad news" is of a piece with the good: The weakness of the birth wall, the absurdity of thinking that a child's location (or its mother's choice) can change its inner nature, can easily permit *Roe*'s prebirth nominalism to expand to displace realism after birth as well. For someone committed to *Roe*, the realization that there is no real difference between abortion and infanticide can mean only that infanticide must, at least in principle, be permitted.

This logic can be seen at work in the current widespread support among pro-choice advocates for the right to kill a fetus during induced delivery. If the child partially outside the womb could be protected against having its brain sucked out, how could exactly the same child still wholly inside be dismembered with impunity? In order to avoid this question, the right to partial-birth abortion must be affirmed with vigor.

But even clearer, I think, has been the apparently universal support for infanticide in pro-abortion scholarship. I am thinking here of the works of people like Joseph Fletcher, Michael Tooley, Ronald M. Green, Jonathan Glover, Peter Singer, and perhaps Steven Pinker, but to my knowledge they represent

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not just a majority, but a very solid consensus. A survey by Don Marquis in the *Journal of Philosophy* showed that all pro-choice theories developed by 1989 deny that there is anything wrong prima facie with killing infants. I know of no pro-abortion scholar who has written that there is something *intrinsically* wrong with early postnatal infanticide. The reason is obvious: if the newborn has intrinsic (real, in our terms) dignity, then the same child located in the womb just prior to birth must have equal dignity. Indeed, if the newborn infant has inherent dignity, even the just-conceived embryo must have a like dignity, for the only humanly significant attributes possessed by the newborn are possessed as well by the embryo: membership in our species and (what comes to the same thing) design for human community, with its virtues of reason and love.

To say that actual manifestation of (rather than mere design for) these virtues is required for human dignity would be to exclude the infant along with the embryo. To focus upon the actualized traits possessed by the infant but not the embryo (e.g., size or ability to survive with less external life support) would be to include many nonhuman entities and, moreover, would be to point to traits that are ultimately just not very important to our idea of human dignity. For this very reason, the German Constitutional Court ruled unanimously in 1975, with an entirely different panel reaffirming also unanimously in 1993, that the constitutional right to life must extend throughout pregnancy. Since we know that newborn infants have human dignity, despite the fact that their uniquely human virtues subsist only as potentialities, we cannot deny that same dignity to the unborn, who possess those same potentialities. In the words of the German court:

> The process of development . . . is a continuing process which exhibits no sharp demarcation and does not allow a precise division of the various steps of development of the human life. The process does not end with birth; the phenomena of consciousness which are specific to the human personality, for example, appear for the first time a rather long time after birth. Therefore, the protection . . . of the Basic Law cannot be limited either to the "completed" human being after birth or to the child about to be born which is independently capable of living. . . . [N]o distinction can be made here between various stages of the life developing itself before birth, or between unborn and born life.

Many pro-abortion academics do claim to discern a bright line at a later, post-infantile stage of human life. For example, H. Tristam Engelhardt, Jr. has averred that true personhood inheres only in the normal adult human. Such thinkers are still realists; they just think that what really matters begins quite a bit later than birth. And, in their favor, it must be admitted that almost any developmental point they might choose—e.g., self-consciousness, the age of reason, even puberty—will be more real and thus more arguable than *Roe*'s choice of birth. But can such points remain bright lines in the postmodern era? If the existence of the self is a cognitive illusion, as some argue, how can self-consciousness really matter? If reason is only manipulation, an epiphenomenon of the will to power, why should it matter more than, say, muscles? It is vain to suppose that new attempts to construct real walls against killing can be successful in our age of deconstruction.

Rather than search vainly for a new bright line after birth, more perspicacious pro-abortion jurists have opted to rid themselves of the principle to which we pointed early in this essay, a principle that makes it necessary to have bright lines in the first place: human equality. If human beings can be treated in radically unequal ways, if they need not even in principle be accorded equal protection under the law, then those who favor abortion need not be disturbed by the continuity of human life. If unequal treatment of human beings is acceptable, the need to assert a fundamental difference between fetus and infant disappears. Why bother wracking one's brain to find a difference if they need not be shown equal respect, even granting their common humanity?

Among academics, Ronald Dworkin has perhaps done the most to advance human inequality in the law. "The less profitable effort invested in each human being, the less regrettable the killing of that being" paraphrases a non-egalitarian notion that Dworkin applies throughout the human life span, after as well as before birth.

But some of our federal appellate judges (not yet with explicit U.S. Supreme Court approval) have cut even more directly to the quick. Seeking to justify lesser state protection for the lives of those terminally disabled, in 1996 Judge Roger Miner wrote for the Second Circuit, "Surely the state's interest lessens as the potential for life diminishes." For the Ninth Circuit in the same year, Judge Stephen Reinhardt wrote: "[The strength of] the state's interest in preserving life . . . is dependent on relevant circumstances, including the medical condition . . . of the person whose life is at stake." Judge Robert Beezer, writing in dissent, countered that the court is thus reexamining "the historic presumption that all human lives are equally and intrinsically valuable," and that this reexamination may be "a mere rationalization for housecleaning, cost-cutting, and burden-shifting—a way to get rid of those whose lives we deem worthless."

Perhaps because of Judge Beezer's forceful challenge, Judge Reinhardt sought to bolster his position with the Supreme Court's jurisprudence denying equal protection to the unborn:

> In right-to-die cases, the outcome of the balanc-

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> ing test may differ at different points along the life cycle as a person's physical or medical condition deteriorates, just as in abortion cases the permissibility of restrictive state legislation may vary with the progression of the pregnancy. . . . [B]oth types of cases raise issues of life and death.

Judge Beezer did not attempt to deny the majority's analogy to abortion law, just to narrow it:

> [I]n the abortion context, the Supreme Court tells us that the state's interests in fetal life are weaker before viability than they are once the fetus becomes viable. . . . A state's interest in preserving human life is stronger when applied to viable beings than it is when applied to nonviable beings. Like a first-trimester fetus, a person kept alive by life-sustaining treatment is essentially nonviable. A terminally ill patient seeking to commit physician-assisted suicide, by contrast, is essentially viable. The patient may be inexorably approaching the line of nonviability. But the patient is still on the viable side of that line, and consequently enjoys the full protection of the state's interest in preserving life.

Of course, since even fully viable fetuses enjoy nowhere near the "full protection" of the Constitution under *Roe* and *Casey*, Judge Beezer's analogy is cold comfort even for the disabled person capable of surviving without life supports. If such a person counts only as much as a viable fetus, he will get far less than equal protection from our law.

In denying the constitutional duty of equal protection, are these appellate judges doing anything more than following the lead of *Casey*? In holding that *Roe* must stand even if it was wrongly decided, *Casey* proclaimed that the State's duty of equal protection falls before *stare decisis* and the prestige needs of the Court. Reinhardt and Beezer read that case well.

The honesty newly permitted by the *Casey* decision thus cuts in two directions. The fact that the same child exists within and without the womb can lead us to two opposite conclusions. We can begin to treat the pre-born with respect equal to that which we now show to already-born human beings. Or we can come to treat some of those already born with the same disrespect we now show toward the pre-born. We can become more realistic about the entire human life span, or we can begin to doubt the human nature of others thought inconvenient and less capable. Or we may finesse the whole problem of nominalism vs. realism by denying the State's duty of equal protection, leaving the weak to their own devices regardless of whether they are human in nature or only in name. FT

Reasons to Stay on the Porch During Storms

First the soft stuff, like stir fry on the lawn
Or a drummer brushing his snare.
Then the pellets rapping the roof,
Punctuated by rim shots, metallic in the gutters.

After that, lightning mapping the rivers of the sky,
Searing them to the eye sockets in photogravure.
And thunder, like barrels on a wooden floor
Rolling, rolling to a distant storage.

Finally: wind, shaking loose the trees,
Airing out their hidden leaves,
And a chestful of oxygen drawn in,
The first breath, it would seem, in years.

Tim Bascom

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Faith & Therapy

William Kilpatrick

Seventeen years ago in *Psychological Seduction* I wrote about the dangers of mixing psychology with religious faith. Such a mixing, I cautioned, would result in a dilution of faith. Six years before that, Paul Vitz had made a similar point in *Psychology as Religion*: psychology, he wrote, had become a substitute for faith—a new religion encouraging a cult of self-worship. We both emphasized that this psychological faith, although it bore a surface resemblance to Christianity, was incompatible with, indeed, deeply hostile to, Christian faith.

Psychology as faith has proven to be a sturdy creed—almost all of the criticisms we made then could be made today. The concepts of popular psychology are still being blended with Christian faith, and confusion still abounds. The attraction to psychology is not, of course, confined to the area of religion. The assumptions and techniques of psychology and therapy have found their way into business, schools, families, popular entertainment, and even the courts—so much so that it has become common to speak of our society as a "therapeutic culture." As long ago as 1966, Philip Rieff's book *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* predicted that this psychological mode of understanding society and identity would triumph over all other modes. It would become the frame of reference by which all other beliefs and commitments would be judged.

One would expect Christian churches to resist this rival faith. Instead, they have in differing degrees been seduced by it, unable in many cases to say where the psychological faith ends and the Christian faith begins. The continuing temptation to blend psychology and faith suggests the importance of revisiting the arguments against this ill-advised ecumenism. The arguments fall roughly into two categories: those of the don't-embarrass-yourself variety, and those of the more serious don't-cut-your-own-throat variety.

The first line of criticism is employed in a recent article by Paul Vitz entitled "Support from Psychology for the Fatherhood of God" (*Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, February 1997). He first notes that the Christian concept of God as Father has been under attack—much of the attack coming from Catholics influenced by feminist psychology. But, says Vitz, much of this psychology, based as it is on an androgynous view of the person, is passé. All the latest research, he continues, shows how very different the sexes are, and how fathers and mothers play distinct roles that are not interchangeable. All the statistics, moreover, clearly demonstrate what happens when fathers cease playing their role in family and society. Indeed, fatherlessness correlates with crime, drug addiction, school dropout rates, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies better than any other factor. Moreover, it turns out that boys are much more fragile than girls and suffer much more acutely from the absence of fathers. (See, for example, psychologist Michael Gurian's two books on the subject, *The Wonder of Boys* and *A Fine Young Man*.) Vitz observes that, doctrinal objections aside, it is "bizarre to the point of pathology at this time in our culture to be trying to remove God the Father from our theology."

> We are just now aware of the widespread social pathology, especially the increase in violence, resulting from fatherlessness in families and the data are staggering! (See David Blankenhorn's 1995 book *Fatherless America: Confronting our Most Urgent Social Problem*.) What worse moment could there be to diminish fatherhood in our theology? We have enough absent fathers without trying to send God the Father away too! To remove God the Father is to remove a major support for positive male identity. In a

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church that is already far more popular with women than with men, this means the removal of one of the few remaining supports for men.

When Christians embrace psychological fads in hopes of keeping up to date, they frequently end up behind the curve when the fads turn out to be just that. The foolishness that can result is illustrated by a recent Christian youth curriculum that includes a cross-dressing activity called the Suitcase Relay. It works like this: "On the word Go, a first couple (boy and girl) from each team must run with their suitcase to the opposite end of the room, open the suitcase, and put on everything in the suitcase . . . the boy putting on the lady's dress and the girl putting on the man's suit."

One can only urge purveyors of such nonsense to stop embarrassing themselves. Psychologists up to date with the literature on adolescent development no longer counsel gender confusion. Sex roles, they have found, are not to be carelessly tampered with.

There are a number of other therapeutic concepts that are now either in dispute or in disrepute with professionals but are nonetheless still tremendously popular with religious educators, parishes, priests, and bishops. Take the concept of self-esteem, now a central element in curricula for Catholic and other Christian youth. In psychological circles serious questions are being raised about the efficacy of high self-esteem, and about whether the trait can even be measured.

For example, the measure of self-esteem used in the well-known American Association of University Women (AAUW) study seems highly questionable. According to that study, girls suffer a sharp drop in self-esteem when they enter high school. But look at the items employed on the self-esteem questionnaire: statements such as "I'm happy the way I am," "I like most things about myself," and "I'm an important person." To these statements children can choose one of five responses: "always true," "sort of true," "sometimes true/sometimes false," "sort of false," or "always false." But what sort of person would answer "always true" to "I'm happy the way I am" or "I'm an important person"? Someone with insight or someone who feels a need to be defensive or boastful? It is not surprising that boys, who are less self-reflective than girls of the same age, would score higher on this test.

Moreover, as Christina Hoff Sommers has pointed out, there seems to be no connection between high self-esteem scores and academic success. A little-reported outcome of the AAUW study is that, although boys tested higher than girls on self-esteem, the very highest average scores were obtained by black girls and black boys. When the results were broken down by race, black boys showed the highest level of self-esteem. Yet, as is well-known, black boys do not, on average, do well in school, and they do not go on to college in very large numbers. On the other hand, white girls—the group that scores lowest on self-esteem—is the group that displays the greatest academic success.

These findings should at least raise doubts about the importance of self-esteem. But there's more. Recent studies by Roy Baumeister of Case Western Reserve University suggest that high self-esteem may be related to *anti*-social behavior. In fact, the most dangerous youth seem to have highly inflated opinions of themselves. Efforts to raise self-esteem, suggests Baumeister, may actually increase violent behavior.

Once again, Christian educators seem to be on the wrong track. At just the moment in our history when youth violence and drug use are at near-record highs, at just the moment when adults ought to be talking to youngsters about self-control and self-restraint, their energies are focused instead on teaching children to applaud themselves. We seem bent on giving our children the opposite of what they need.

It's the same with the popular concept of non-judgmentalism. If there ever was a time in which it was important for youngsters to exercise moral judgment, this is it. As psychologist William Coulson has pointed out, "It's precisely the *necessity* of judgment, not its absence, that must be promoted with the young today, given the magnitude of the drug problem." Yet in Christian education the emphasis is still very often on acceptance, trust, and the absence of judgment.

A good example is provided in a curriculum lesson for evangelical children. The lesson presents two children, Amanda, who is fat and unattractive, and Jason, who shows a marijuana joint around school to impress the other boys. The lesson is that students are not to judge either Amanda or Jason, but rather "to accept them as they are." Cathy Mickels and Audrey McKeever, authors of *Spiritual Junk Food: The Dumbing Down of Christian Youth*, pinpoint the problem. They write, "To equate a girl who is quiet and unattractive with a boy showing an illegal drug around is not only confusing, but is an example of distorted and twisted reasoning." As the authors point out, Jason is probably not the kind of boy you would want your child to associate with, yet there is nothing in the curriculum to indicate that he ought to be avoided or corrected. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 we are told, "Do not be deceived: bad company corrupts good morals," but the world of Christian textbooks does not usually encourage this sort of judgment. Rather, it is a world inhabited by basically good and well-intentioned people who seem to have been barely touched by the effects of original sin.

Examples of this sort can be multiplied. Charles Sykes, in his book *A Nation of Victims*, describes a Colorado church that offers thirteen different weekly support groups ranging from "Debtors Anonymous"

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through "Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous" to "Codependents of Sex Addicts Anonymous." This parish clearly subscribes to the medical model of human behavior. Meanwhile, other churches have bought into the notion that homosexuality is biologically driven and is therefore not a choice. Yet these are issues that are hotly contested by professional psychologists. The evidence that homosexuality is biologically driven, for instance, is quite skimpy and far from convincing. It seems quite ill-advised for Christians to join the chorus of theories suggesting we can't help ourselves, that we are not really responsible for our behavior.

The informal alliance formed between evangelical Christians and clinical psychologists during the day care witch-hunts of the 1980s provides another example that should be embarrassing to psychologizing Christians. The clinicians had come up with a number of interesting theories that soon gained the force of law: one theory asserted that children never lie about sex, another claimed that repressed memories could be reliably recovered. More ominously, the psychologists had discovered a new syndrome called Ritual Satanic Child Abuse. The symptoms of this disease were legion and included forced sex, occult rituals, and animal sacrifice. Unfortunately, many evangelicals in the affected localities were all too ready to believe that Satan was alive and active in the local day care centers. In many instances they joined forces with the psychologists and law enforcers, and even provided incriminating evidence against the defendants.

Dozens of people ended up in prison as a result of the day care scares of the eighties, and many careers and reputations were ruined. We know now that it really was a witch-hunt. The FBI reports that there is no evidence of a single case of ritual satanic child abuse in the United States. We know now that the child witnesses had been subjected to leading questions, threats, and bribes. We know now that most of the testimony was bizarre and fantastic. We know now that, in addition to recovered memories, there are also suggested memories—memories of events that never happened. Thankfully, most of the convictions in these cases have now been overturned, but many individuals still linger in prison. The day care cases show that child experts can sometimes be extremely naive, and that Christians can sometimes be remarkably gullible. It should not surprise us that when the two join forces the result can sometimes be credulity compounded.

It is embarrassing to be behind the times, and even more embarrassing to be caught up in psychological delusions and hysterias, but embarrassment ought not be the only reason for avoiding ill-considered alliances with the world of psychology. There are reasons of survival, too—reasons of the don't-cut-your-own-throat variety. The mixing of psychology with faith can be destructive to Christianity; this is especially true when questions of doctrine are involved. Indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish between what is merely embarrassing and what approaches the suicidal.

One of the most destructive consequences of carelessly mixing therapy with faith is a diminished sense of sin. The best evidence that this has already happened in the Catholic Church is the tremendous drop-off in the practice of confession over the last thirty years. When we couple this with the nearly 100 percent communion turnout in most parishes, we have to conclude that most parishioners don't have a strong consciousness of sin. They seem to have been so schooled in the gospel of self-acceptance that they can't think of any sins they need to confess.

A colleague at Boston College told me a story that reinforces the point. He once asked members of his philosophy class to write an anonymous essay about a personal struggle over right and wrong, good and evil. Most of the students, however, were unable to complete the assignment. "Why?" he asked. "Well," they said—and apparently this was said without irony—"We haven't done anything wrong." We can see a lot of self-esteem here, but little self-awareness—the absence of a sense of sin seems strange when one considers that most of these students have had years of Catholic schooling.

It is strange as well that this inability to talk about sin, Satan, and the existence of evil comes at a time when the imagination of young people is captivated by performers such as Marilyn Manson who flirt with an aestheticized Satanism. If we want Christian youth to struggle against the temptations of evil in this world, they at least ought to be forewarned that evil exists. They ought to know, also, that Satan is more than just a name dreamed up by a rock band.

A related—if seemingly opposite—problem resulting from freely mixing faith with psychology is a diminished sense of the sacred. I discovered in a survey of religious texts for Catholic students that they are studded with references to "communications breakdowns," "risk-taking," "involvement," "decision-making," "personhood," "I-you relationships," "getting in touch," "self-disclosure," "awareness," and "assertiveness." The pervasive use of such language carries the implication that all the deep mysteries of faith can be encompassed in secular/psychological categories. There is in these texts very little sense that there *are* any deep mysteries—elements of the faith so awesome and unfathomable that they exist far beyond the reach of the social sciences. One of the deep mysteries that has suffered is the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. There are several indications that faith in the Real Presence has undergone a process of erosion. For example, a poll taken a few years ago suggests that many Catholics either do not understand or do not accept the doctrine of the Real

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Presence. More telling, perhaps, is the marked decline in the practice of benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and in the practice of eucharistic adoration. If many Catholics have become casual about holy communion, it may well be because they have lost the sense that communion is indeed *holy*—an encounter with the Source of all holiness.

Philip Rieff has written that a therapeutic society is by its very nature a negation of the sacred order. It has no room for the concept of transcendence. Obsessed with self-fulfillment and self-realization, it is uncomfortable with higher claims on our attention. "Religious man was born to be saved," writes Rieff, "psychological man is born to be pleased." One way of pleasing him is to reduce everything to his size, something at which religious educators have become rather proficient. In religious studies curricula, both Catholic and evangelical, a great deal of energy goes into entertaining the student with games, puzzles, fun activities, and the like. The texts contain happy faces and sad faces, connect-the-dot games, teddy bears, pictures to color, and stickers to paste. One video curriculum for evangelical children is entitled *The Gospel According to St. Bernard.* It features, as you might guess, a cuddly St. Bernard dog. Bernie's theme song introduces each segment:

> The questions of life are tough to figure
> But we found a friend, like us, but bigger
> He helps when we're caught off guard
> Here comes the Gospel According to Saint Bernard.
> Bernie loves kids like you and me
> His doghouse is Florida by the sea
> He helps us follow God's plan
> When we listen to Bernie
> It's never very hard
> To love him, he's Bernie
> The Saint Bernard.

The quest for relevance does not abate as students grow older. For junior high and high school students there are blind walks, trust falls, tree hugging exercises, role playing, self-esteem relays, and various touching activities such as the "blush" game and the "lap-sit" game. Besides taking away valuable time that might be spent learning Christian doctrine, the use of such games carries the implication that the Christian faith by itself is insufficient. Students may be forgiven if they gain the impression that the faith must be reinforced by secular concepts and activities, that it must be made attractive by blending it with secular forms of entertainment.

More insidiously, such presentations subtly erode the sense of awe and reverence with which God ought to be approached. In their quest for what is relevant and recognizable, religious educators often reduce God to a comfortable size. He becomes a chummy friend whom we can approach with an easy and casual familiarity, another reason why for many Catholics receiving communion seems not to be an occasion of soul searching or prior purification.

This desacralization process can happen even when materials are free of doctrinal error, and even when sound concepts and accurate Bible narratives are present. A lot depends on the presentation. For example, compare the Faith and Life catechism series published by Ignatius Press with a similar series from Sadlier, Coming to Faith. Book One of Sadlier, *Coming to God* covers approximately the same content as Book One of Faith and Life, *Our Heavenly Father.*

In the Sadlier volume, the Creation is there, and so is the Fall, the birth of Christ, the Last Supper, Pentecost, the Mass, the sacrament of Baptism, the Our Father, and the Hail Mary. But it is revealing to see what else is present. In addition to Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and the apostles, there is a poem about a fish named Sharkey and a crab named Charlie, a picture of a T-shirt to be colored in with the signs of Easter joy, a poem about Shelly Turtle and her friends, Gator and Froggie, a connect-the-dots game, a celebration circles game, a puzzle to be cut out and glued together, instructions for making a moon and stars mobile, two pages of stickers, and a paste-your-picture-in-a-sunflower activity.

The average child, of course, is familiar with all this. He has encountered similar activities and games in countless other places. And there's the rub. The continual juxtaposition of the sacred and the secular conveys the (hopefully unintended) message that the two are on the same level. The authors seem afraid to suggest that there is anything outside or beyond the child's experience. Over and over, the events depicted in the Bible are related to everyday and often trivial activities. The illustrations convey the same message. Most depict boys and girls engaged in everyday activities: drinking milk, feeding a cat, shaking hands, playing ball, playing at the seashore, blowing pinwheels, flying kites, and so forth—exactly the sort of illustrations that children would find in a public school text.

By contrast, the cover of *Our Heavenly Father* is graced by Raphael's "Creation of the Animals." In this painting God the Creator has a kindly countenance, but at the same time He appears immensely powerful, and He dwarfs the lion standing beside Him. The painting evokes a response of awe and humility.

The rest of the text is illustrated with more Raphaels, as well as paintings by Fra Angelico, Barocci, Titian, Velasquez, and Veronese. The sections on the Mass and the sacrament of Baptism are accompanied by photos of a priest reverently saying Mass and administering the sacrament. There are no distracting pictures of boys and girls flying kites, no teddy bears, no fun activities, no stickers to paste.

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The chapters are short and readable, and present in an understandable sequence the story of Creation, Fall, preparation for the Savior, and the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ. The student encounters the powerful and eternally relevant story that changed the world—and does so undistracted by a supporting cast of stuffed animals and cartoon characters.

The text, though simplified, does not pander to the child's immaturity, nor does it convey the notion that the mysteries of faith are comprehensible from within his own experience. On the contrary, the refusal to compromise with fads, gimmicks, and self-esteem activities allows the drama of redemption to shine through as the unique and central event that it is.

The trivializing of so many religious texts is, again, but one small reflection of the effect of Rieff's therapeutic culture. Such a culture, he observed, is one focused primarily on the self and its material and psychological needs. A therapeutic society is not simply one in which many people go to therapists, but rather one in which the therapeutic mode of analysis becomes the preferred way of explaining what life is all about, and the therapeutic technique is extended to all areas of life. The most obvious examples of this therapeutic expansion are the television talk shows which provide mass therapies of confession, and which attract huge viewing audiences. These lachrymose entertainments should not distract us, however, from noticing that the therapeutic is essentially a religion, a religion in which faith in God is replaced by faith in the self and its possibilities. The therapeutic can tolerate other religions as long as they conform to its own image and likeness, but it is implacably hostile to religions that make a transcendent or supernatural claim.

The message of the therapeutic faith is precisely the reverse of John the Baptist's message, "He must increase and I must decrease." Its central creed is nicely captured in the words of the first Humanist Manifesto issued in 1933 by the American Humanist Association: "Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now." This, as the advertisers might say, is not your father's religion. "The modern individual," writes Rieff, "can only use the community as the necessary stage for his effort to enhance himself."

The co-opting of faith by therapy culminates in spectacles like that surrounding the death of Princess Diana. Faced with the stark contrast between the lives of Mother Teresa and Princess Di, the masses concluded that both were saints. Mother Teresa's project in life was to do God's work; Diana's project was mainly herself. For years we were treated to open displays of her affairs, her emotions, her sufferings, her illnesses, her charities, her wardrobe, and her confessions. In an earlier age such a life might have elicited responses of pity or contempt, but in a therapeutic culture these are exactly the traits that merit sainthood.

The most obvious current example of the therapeutic co-opting religion is provided for us by Bill Clinton. It is a marvel to see how easily and smoothly he mixes the therapeutic with the religious, and how effortlessly and shamelessly he bends the vocabulary of faith to serve his own designs. He has "sinned," he seeks "forgiveness," he has a "broken spirit."

In a recent issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, Dick Morris, Clinton's former advisor, is quoted as saying, "The people who are going to help [Mr. Clinton] out of this scandal are ministers, clergymen, psychiatrists, and experts on addiction." Shortly afterwards *Newsweek* reported that the President had asked a trio of ministers to be his "personal accountability group." One of them is the Rev. J. Philip Wogaman, who thinks the President should not resign or be impeached. According to *Newsweek*, Wogaman believes that such demands would be judgmental, because all men are sinners. The article is immediately followed by a related boxed article reflecting the opinion of therapists. They endorse the ministerial "accountability group" but say Clinton also needs therapy for his "sex addiction." As one of the therapists puts it, "If he can admit his problem and share it with people, he can leave a very powerful legacy of healing." It is very strange, this spectacle of ministers and therapists joining forces to heal the President. It is difficult to say what will come of it, but there is no doubt that the forces of religion have the most to lose from the alliance.

Some forty years ago, C. S. Lewis wrote, "If Christianity is untrue, no honest man will want to believe it, however helpful it might be; if it is true, every honest man will want to believe it, even if it gives him no help at all." In a psychological society, however, the question of the truth of religion is beside the point. The main question, the only question, really, is whether or not religion furthers the cause of the self.

It is important for people of faith to keep in mind that there can be no real compromise between Christianity and the psychological society. Rieff in a 1991 essay insists that the therapeutic culture is at war with traditional culture and aims to destroy it. This seems overblown at first. If the therapeutic culture is our enemy, it appears rather a tame one. After all, it speaks the language of compassion, sensitivity, and tolerance. But any culture that has no use for truth is ultimately a dangerous culture. If there is no meaning outside the self, there is no meaning. And if there is no meaning, there is no morality. As Dostoevsky famously warned, without God everything is permissible—and the therapeutic culture has no God. It is well on the way to dismantling the moral structure of

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society through semi-sincere appeals to tolerance, compassion, and diversity. There is no reason to think it will put limits on what is morally permissible. There is, in the end, not a dime's worth of difference between the nihilism of the therapeutic culture and the nihilism of a Nietzsche—except that the therapeutic culture lacks Nietzsche's sense of the tragic nature of life.

The twentieth century has seen many attacks on Christianity, but the frontal attacks of militant atheists, Marxists, and Nazis have not resulted in as much lost ground for Christians as the more insidious attacks of the therapeutic culture. The sense of guilt, the sense of sin, the sense of the sacred, the sense that there is another order of authority by which we are judged—these have not disappeared entirely from Christian culture, but they have been eroded. If this is difficult to see, it is because of the fog that the culture of therapy emits—an empathic fog which surrounds us and confuses us and prevents us from seeing life clearly. We wander around in this fog thinking our enemy is our friend because he is so exquisitely concerned with our health.

The only thing powerful enough to cut through this fog is the light of revelation. Revelation reminds us that physical and emotional health is not the Alpha and Omega of existence. The Gospels tell us that if our hand offends us we should cut it off, it being better to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell. Likewise, it may be better to enter the kingdom of Heaven with a repressed psyche than to enter the other place brimming with self-assertiveness. There is no ultimate consolation to be found in the theories propounded by psychologists. Psychology has very little to say to the majority of suffering people in this world, and absolutely nothing to say to the fact that all of us must one day die. The therapeutic culture's well-adjusted person, for all his serene sense of self, has one overwhelming problem: he is blinded to the beatific vision. FT

Accused of Adultery

the woman brought before My Son
accused of adultery

was me

... could have been me, they ringed
with their stony eyes and
hardened hearts
fingers itching, bodies aching
to be next, too late to be the first

to cast a stone before the One
Who would know
what it's like

to bear the Last Straw (Light

as a Cross) if Joseph
hadn't stepped forward,

which is what
My Son
probably wrote in the sand, in
Belshazzar font, those oh so many
years ago

: Where is the man?

Carl Winderl

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The Mind of Maimonides

David Novak

The following is the second in a series that examines through the prism of a key figure each century of the millennium now coming to a close. David Novak considers the twelfth century and Moses Maimonides. Next month: Romanus Cessario on the thirteenth century and Thomas Aquinas.

— The Editors

About Moses Maimonides there is an old Jewish folk saying: "From Moses to Moses there was none like Moses." No one brought forth the teaching of Moses and his prophetic and rabbinic successors more comprehensively and systematically than did Maimonides. More has been said and written about him than any other Jewish thinker throughout history. Indeed, many great debates since his death have revolved around the question of just who interpreted Maimonides correctly and who did not. To get Maimonides right has been for many to get Judaism right. His role in the history of Jewish thought is comparable to the role of Thomas Aquinas in Catholic thought. Just as Aquinas (who was influenced by Maimonides) treated with respect all great theologians and philosophers irrespective of religious differences with them, Maimonides did the same with the pagans, Christians, and Muslims, saying about them: "Accept the truth, whatever its source." Indeed, Maimonides himself is a marvelous companion for anyone searching for truth. He could well be considered the outstanding thinker of the twelfth century in the West. His unsurpassed contributions to both Judaism and Western thought left neither quite the same.

His actual name was Moses son of Rabbi Maimon the Spaniard, "Maimonides" being the name his Latin translators gave him, namely, "son of Maimon." (Jews have traditionally referred to him by the acronym *Rambam*.) We know very little about his early life. He was born in 1135 into a distinguished family of rabbinic scholars in Cordoba in Andalus, then part of Muslim (or "Moorish") Spain. His father was his first and most significant teacher. No doubt he was a very precocious youth; he wrote a treatise on proper linguistic usage of theological terms that he probably completed around the age of sixteen. Because of the persecution of non-Muslims by the fanatical Almohad sect, Maimonides and his family were forced to leave Spain when he was in his late teens. They wandered for years in North Africa, where it seems they frequently had to pose as Muslims. After living for a time in the land of Israel, the family finally settled permanently in Fustat, the old city of Cairo in Egypt.

It was Maimonides' good fortune that he did not have to earn a living during his intellectually formative years; his older brother David, a wealthy pearl merchant, supported him. But David died in a shipwreck in the Indian Ocean when Moses was about thirty and his comfortable life was shattered, both financially and emotionally. For about a year, it seems, he remained sunk in a deep depression, during which time he accomplished almost nothing. Eventually his emotional health was restored, and his highly creative career thenceforth moved on at a steady pace. (His advice concerning the treatment of melancholia bears the unmistakable stamp of personal experience and practice.)

Until rather late in the Middle Ages, rabbis were not paid for their services—since Moses taught the Torah for free, so should his successors. For that reason, Maimonides like any other rabbi had to adopt a profession in the world, and like many intellectually gifted medieval rabbis he became a physician. His medical reputation seems to have grown with his reputation as a teacher of the Jewish tradition. His speciality was gastroenterology and a number of

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short treatises he wrote have survived and are useful even today, due to his emphasis on preventive medicine. His advice on proper diet and healthy activities has a very contemporary ring to it. He rose to become the court physician to the political head of his society, the Sultan, and to his court. He was also the acknowledged religious leader of his own Egyptian Jewish community. Soon his fame spread to other Jewish communities, whose leaders consulted him about the most significant questions of law and theology—although a number of Jewish authorities bitterly opposed him as a dangerous radical. For years he maintained a grueling professional schedule, combining his medical practice, community leadership, scholarship, teaching, and an international correspondence.

The last few years of his life were devoted to what we would call today a charity clinic. It seems that he regarded his main intellectual work to have by then been completed and he wanted to devote the rest of his life to putting into practice the theory of *imitatio Dei* he had presented at the end of his major work in philosophical theology, the *Guide of the Perplexed.* Maimonides died in 1204, and, according to tradition, was buried in Tiberius in the land of Israel. His immediate intellectual successor was his only son, Abraham, a gifted scholar though no match for his father.

Aside from treatises and responsa on a variety of religious and scientific topics, Maimonides wrote three major works. His first was a commentary on the *Mishnah,* which is the second-century compendium upon which the discussions in the Talmud are based. Next to Scripture, the *Mishnah* is the most important book in Judaism. Though it is called a "commentary," this first great work of Maimonides is actually more of a digest of the main points of the *Mishnah* and their subsequent development in the Talmud than it is an actual line-by-line exegesis of an older text. It could well be seen as preparatory for his second major work, what Maimonides himself called "our great compilation," *Mishneh Torah,* the fourteen-volume systematization of all Jewish law from Scripture to his own day. (The relation of the first work to the second work could be compared to Aquinas' commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard in relation to his "great compilation," the *Summa Theologiae.*) *Mishneh Torah* is a theological as well as a legal work; Maimonides thought that Jewish theology, itself mandated by the law, should aspire to the precision that characterizes discussions of the law.

Finally, there is his third great work, *Guide of the Perplexed,* the product of his later period. It is devoted to what he considered to be the most important philosophical questions concerning Jewish theology, especially as those questions relate to the text of Scripture. *The Guide,* when translated from its original Arabic into Hebrew during Maimonides' lifetime, became the most important work in philosophical theology for Jews thereafter; and when it was translated into Latin shortly after his death, it was taken most seriously by Aquinas and a number of later Christian thinkers. (The irony of this fame is that Maimonides wrote the *Guide* for only a select number of his disciples, those worthy of being initiated into the "secrets of the Torah.") *The Guide* is also the book that the renegade from Judaism, Baruch Spinoza, felt had to be overcome if philosophy was ever to become independent of revelation.

Maimonides' work itself might be seen as a response to three challenges to his understanding of Judaism: 1) the Jewish tradition itself, 2) Greek natural science, metaphysics, and ethics/politics ("philosophy" in the broad Platonic-Aristotelian sense) as transmitted through Arabic sources, and 3) Christianity and Islam.

The Jewish tradition, itself built upon the discussions of the ancient rabbis in the Talmud and related literature, posed the greatest difficulty for the philosophical mind of Maimonides. The challenge was to organize in an architectonic structure a vast body of data that, on the surface anyway, appears to be hopelessly disjointed and even random. Others before him had tried to tackle this problem—most notably, Isaac Alfasi as regards the legal data and Saadiah Gaon as regards the theological data. Their impressive efforts were still piecemeal compared to that of Maimonides. Alfasi essentially paraphrased rabbinic texts (and not on every subject at that), and gave them a partial topical order. Maimonides was convinced that the philosophical assumptions of Saadiah were too eclectic to sustain the truly systematic theology the Torah required. For these philosophical assumptions Maimonides turned to Plato, the Arabic neo-Platonist Alfarabi, and even more to Aristotle and the Arabic neo-Aristotelian Ibn Sina (Avicenna).

Although not a slavish follower of Aristotle by any means, as we shall soon see, Maimonides was nevertheless convinced by Aristotle's assumption of universal teleology, i.e., that every living entity in the universe has a natural final state. Creatures below the moon begin moving toward their destiny at birth and continue a linear developmental trajectory consummated and sustained in maturity, what Aristotelians see as a movement from potency to act. In plants and animals, such movement is unconscious and instinctual, frustrated only by external impediments. In humans, however, that movement is conscious and to a certain extent free, and thus can be frustrated by bad choices as well.

Between God, who transcends all creaturely categories (hence Maimonides' famous assertion that we can only speak negatively about God, i.e., what He is not rather than what He is), and humans stand the heavenly bodies. These bodies are themselves higher

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intelligences, living beings who orbit in an unending circle motored by their unending and perfect knowledge of God. These intelligences, traditionally called "angels," are the models to which humans aspire in their quest for the *summum bonum*—to know God. Maimonides likens the righteous who attain this in the world-to-come to such angels in their beatific consummation. What the angels are, humans desire to become.

In this world, the immediate task of humans is to discover just what acts contribute to this overall process and how to perform them properly. Jews discover this in the Torah, the tradition stemming from it, and what also is constructed for the sake of the ends of the Torah. Thus Maimonides' positive task as a theologian-jurist was to justify intellectually the commandments of the Torah and the supplementary edicts of the rabbis. He used teleology as the principle which both ordered and applied the law. Here Maimonides' thought is the most significant point of development in the rabbinic doctrine of the "reasons of the commandments." But whereas many of the rabbis assumed that only some of the commandments have reasons intelligible to human minds, Maimonides was convinced that all of the commandments have such reasons. To assume anything less would be to imply that God has less wisdom than a wise human lawgiver.

The difference between reason and revelation is not between what is intelligible and what is inherently "mysterious." Reason is an arduous step-by-step process that attempts to understand the content revealed in a prophetic event. For Maimonides, prophecy is something possible (but not voluntary, ultimately being a gift of grace) for any human being, that is, any human being first possessing some very high moral and intellectual prerequisites. Much of this sounds quite similar to how the philosopher-guardians of Plato's *Republic* first ascend an intellectual ladder by means of dialectic until some of them see with the eye of the intellect the supreme form: the Good. This similarity is no accident, inasmuch as Maimonides' political theory was heavily influenced by Arabic Platonism.

Disagreeing with one prominent rabbinic opinion, Maimonides did not regard the possibility of prophecy to have vanished with the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70, and unlike a great theological predecessor a century earlier, Judah Halevi, he did not regard true prophecy to be confined to the Jews. The superiority of Jewish prophecy to him is a difference of degree rather than of kind. This was important, as we shall soon see, in Maimonides' treatment of Christianity and Islam, the two other monotheistic faiths.

Maimonides' teleology is constituted at two levels. At the first level, he attempts to discern what might be called the "perennial" reasons of the commandments, those based on permanent features of human nature pertaining either to the relationship with God or to relationships among human persons in society. The former he called the "repair of the soul"; the second he called the "repair of the body" (as in the body politic). As an example of his reasoning on this first level, he notes that even though there are worse crimes than murder—especially idolatry, which unlike murder or any other prohibition is exceptionless —human society must take the prohibition of murder most seriously since without it even a rudimentary human society is impossible. Indeed, Maimonides learned much about political order from both Plato and Aristotle, both of whom were at least participants in idolatry if not actually committed to it in spirit themselves. To cite another example, although the strict observance of the Sabbath is considered by the Talmud to be for Jews alone, Maimonides saw great human value in the way the Sabbath teaches human beings to appreciate divine creation of the universe and the way it creates true rest for human beings, enabling them to interact regularly with each other in a way based more on spiritual equality and less on physical inequality.

At the second level, Maimonides' teleology is much more historically contingent, for there are many details of the Torah that cannot be explained by their immediate value to human nature per se. About some of these details, such as those pertaining to intricacies of the sacrificial system or the system of ritual purity, Maimonides confesses ignorance. He admits that he can explain only more general institutions and not every particularity within them. Regarding institutions like the sacrificial system, whose reasons seem obscure, Maimonides resorts to a certain amount of historical speculation. He is convinced, for instance, that because of the Jewish people's long exposure to idolatrous practices with their emphasis on physical worship, the Torah could not have successfully commanded the Jews to adopt a purely spiritual form of worship, consisting solely in the adoration of the transcendent God. Essentially, the Torah had to make a kind of cultural compromise, keeping the form of worship to which the people were accustomed, but purging it of its idolatrous intentions. In this way, Maimonides seems to have followed the talmudic principle: the law has to take the evil inclination into consideration. Accordingly, the third main purpose of the Torah is to wean the people away from idolatry by not only prohibiting its theory and practice, but also ruling out the cultural symptoms of idolatry that have appeared in history, especially at the origins of Jewish history.

This does not mean, however, that Maimonides was thereby making the Torah into a historically contingent teaching. He regarded idolatry itself to be a perennial problem of human nature, because humans always need to relate themselves to their Cre-

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ator, and there is a right way and a wrong way to do so. Maimonides thought that idolatry was often a more immediately attractive option to human beings than the proper worship of God, which is harder and more demanding of the intellect. Idolatry is an ineradicable human problem because it results from the inappropriate use of human imagination, and yet humans cannot very well live without imagination. That is why one can only treat the symptoms of idolatry at any given historical moment and hope that such treatment will prevent this endemic disease of human nature from worsening or spreading. For this reason one can see why there is no inconsistency between Maimonides' explanation of idolatry along the lines of cultural anthropology and his eschatological hope for the restoration of the Temple cult with its full system of animal sacrifice, a feature of the liturgy since long before Maimonides' time. The symptoms of idolatry are no accident and, hence, the ancient practices mandated by the Torah are still the best prophylactic against this treatable but permanently incurable disease.

In the Jewish tradition, idolatry, literally called *avodah zarah*, "strange worship," takes two forms. One form is the worship of "other" gods, a substitution for the one, unique, uncreated Infinity by something plural, generic, created, and finite. Such idolatry is the worship of those whom we call "pagans." For Maimonides, those who worship the heavenly intelligences are guilty of making absolute those forces which are under the total control of the one God. That is the essential difference between monotheism, of which Judaism is the highest but not the only example, and all polytheisms ancient and contemporary. The second form of idolatry, however, is a good deal more subtle than the pagan form, and is a constant temptation even to the adherents of monotheistic religions. For this form of idolatry does not err in the object of its worship but, rather, it errs in worshiping this true God in a way inconsistent with what little we know about God and his interest in the world.

For Maimonides, this second type of idolatry has its real origin in bad monotheistic theology that takes the anthropomorphic language of Scripture literally. Good theology takes scriptural language that attributes physical properties of God to be largely figurative. It is a concession to human imagination, which even philosophers have to deal with because of the humanity they share with all other humans. At most, what philosophical monotheists can do is reconstrue scriptural God-talk as being either an imaginatively appealing description of the effects of God's creative action on the world, or as a negation of ascribing to God any of the limitations of his creatures. For Maimonides, to say that "God is good" is to say either that God is the cause of what we take to be good in the world, or else to say that God is not bad.

At the practical level, Maimonides carried this out by attempting to purge Judaism of any superstitions he thought had accrued to it over the ages. He especially lacked patience for much of the poetry that had found its way into the liturgy. Like Plato, whose political philosophy had such an influence on his own political thought, it seems that Maimonides too would have banished the poets from the optimal city, which for him is the society constituted by the Torah. He could do only so much along these lines since some of this poetry was too ensconced in the tradition to be entirely rooted out.

Against this backdrop, the theology or theosophy of the *Kabbalah*, which began to appear after Maimonides' time, might well be seen as nothing less than the return of the repressed. Indeed, even today one can see the two main options in Jewish God-talk as being either Maimonidean or Kabbalistic. Whereas Kabbalah holds that all the language of revelation is a positive description of the inner life of God, Maimonides and his followers hold that the language of Scripture is about the world and only speaks of God by means of effect or negation (the *via negativa*).

Even though Maimonides did not think that all philosophers are necessarily prophets, he did think that all prophets are necessarily philosophers. "Philosophy" in Maimonides' day meant natural science, metaphysics, and ethics/politics. In terms of his theology, this meant that there could not be a lasting impasse between the truth derived from philosophy and the truth derived from the Torah. Thus philosophy in this full sense posed a great challenge to Maimonides. For it was philosophy that had perplexed Maimonides' student, Rabbi Joseph son of Rabbi Judah, and some others like him, and Maimonides intended in the *Guide* , which is addressed as an epistle to Rabbi Joseph, to lead them out of this spiritual dilemma.

The Torah might not be worldly in its origins and in its ultimate end; nevertheless, it is still in the world and must be understood by secular criteria. Like the world, the Torah is a created entity; as the rabbis put it, the Torah speaks in human language, a principle Maimonides reworked philosophically. The Torah, then, must be grasped in the same way one grasps created nature. Thus Maimonides would not have accepted, as many who have followed Kant have, that there is an absolute difference between the world constituted by natural science and the world constituted by those disciplines that include human action. Whereas Kant and his followers (and there have been many among Christians and Jews) could believe in a natural world in which everything is causally determined and a moral world in which there is freedom and call this impasse an antinomy, Maimonides and his followers could not accept freedom in the moral world unless there is also less than absolute determinism in the natural world.

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In this area, Maimonides' main problem was what to do when the Torah and philosophy seem to contradict one another, which usually arose over issues of natural science. The most serious such contradiction Maimonides faced was that the Torah is traditionally interpreted to teach that the universe is the result of a pure act of divine creation, an act having no preconditions, hence creation "out of nothing." But Aristotle, who for Maimonides is the most convincing natural scientist, taught that the universe is eternal, without beginning and without end.

Here Maimonides boldly asserts that if Aristotle had convincingly demonstrated his theory of the eternity of the universe, then one would have to reinterpret the Torah accordingly (something that was actually done by the fourteenth-century Jewish theologian and natural scientist Gersonides). Maimonides had to say this since, for him, both the Torah and nature are created entities, hence subject to the same basic methodology to bring out their inherent intelligibility. And since we are in the world known by philosophy before we are able to receive the Torah (remember: the prophets must first be philosophers), the method for understanding the Torah is derived from our method for understanding the world, not vice versa. Maimonides accepted the authority of tradition only in matters of law. In matters of science, however—and he would consider most of theology to be a science—there are no authorities. One must be convinced by whatever is most rationally convincing here and now, however much it might go against traditionally accepted opinions. Accordingly, to the chagrin of a number of traditionalists, he refused to assign any authority at all to the natural science of the rabbis of the Talmud, even though he fully accepted their legal authority in providing indispensable rules and principles for current legal decision-making.

Nevertheless, despite this possibility of revising much of traditional creation theory along Aristotelian lines, Maimonides rejects the eternity of the world, not because he opts for tradition over Aristotle, but because Aristotle did not satisfactorily demonstrate his own thesis. Aristotle made an unconvincing (to Maimonides) inference from his natural science to a metaphysical conclusion. As a result, Aristotle's eternity thesis was just as plausible or implausible as the traditional Jewish (and Christian and Muslim thereafter) doctrine of creation ex nihilo. If so, then there is an historical advantage to sticking with the traditional view since when it comes to change, the burden of proof is more on those who would change than on those who would maintain the status quo.

Even though Maimonides could have left the question at that point, he wanted to move in an intellectually more satisfying direction. So he presses Aristotle on his own ground: teleology. Maimonides argues that Aristotle is not teleological enough. For whereas Aristotle could constitute an immanent teleology *in* the universe, he could not constitute a teleology *for* the universe. That is, he could not locate a purpose for the universe as a whole. He could not do that because his God is too immanent; his God is still part of the universe, even if at its very apex.

For Maimonides, only a God who utterly transcends the universe could have created it with a purpose that transcends anything internal to it: the purpose is to know God. This transcendence of cosmic purpose and the transcendence of God are correlated. The teleology that Aristotle partially, and so accurately, constituted *in* the world is now to be constituted as being given *to* the world as a whole from beyond. Thus Maimonides shows that not only is the doctrine of creation not at odds with cosmic teleology, it actually carries it beyond the limitations of Aristotle's theory. Maimonides never says that creation out of nothing can be proved. For how could it be proved when proof is what can be shown in a relation of entities within the world itself? Nevertheless, creation theory provides an overall paradigm that brings out more of the intelligibility of the universe precisely because it can relate it as a whole to what is beyond it. Hence a doctrine of faith helps expand the very horizon of reason.

Maimonides' approach to the two other monotheistic faiths, Christianity and Islam, is quite similar to his approach to philosophy. (He saw no value at all in polytheistic faiths.) Like philosophy, Christianity and Islam are true when they are variations of themes most completely presented in Judaism; and they are in error when they contradict Judaism. Furthermore, like his treatment of philosophy and, indeed, like his treatment of Judaism itself, Maimonides judges these other communities based on a criterion of the relation of theory and practice. On this central point, Maimonides is very much the Platonist and not the consistent Aristotelian some scholars have thought him to be.

In the *Republic*, Plato sees the philosopher-guardian's function to be both practical and theoretical. He is to provide the best possible practical rule of the polity because of his insight into the theoretical foundations of the good life, and he is to provide the practical means for would-be philosophers to be able to pursue the true life of the intellect. Theory (in Greek, "to gaze"—in Plato's usage to gaze at the eternal Forms) grounds practice, and practice is for the sake of theory. Practical excellence without theoretical excellence gives us competent politicians without real vision, and theoretical excellence without practical excellence gives us incompetent dreamers. For Aristotle, conversely, such a combination is an impossibility because practical excellence makes one see theory as unrealistic and theoretical excellence makes one see practice as boring. Nevertheless, for Maimonides, what might not be possible in a purely human polity, especially one with an erro-

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neous theological tradition, is possible in a polity directly related to God through prophecy. Instead of accepting Aristotle's political skepticism, Maimonides carries Plato's politics even further, doing what he did to Aristotle's metaphysics, namely, carrying it beyond its original limits. Maimonides is quite clear that a normative teaching is considered divine not so much because of its origins in revelation, but, rather, because it directs a human community to ends first human ("the repair of the body"), then divine ("the repair of the soul"). By this criterion Judaism becomes the best divine law, but not the only one.

Within this overall scheme, one can see Maimonides' consistent treatment of Islam, a religious community he lived under all his life. Maimonides sees the relation of Islam to Judaism as primarily theoretical. With the strict monotheism of Islam, Maimonides has no quarrel. Indeed, he could not have formulated his monotheistic theology if he had not learned his philosophical method for theology from Muslims. Maimonides finds fault, however, with the practical politics of Muslim regimes. He considered Islamic ethics and politics to be inferior to their Jewish counterparts. As much as he possibly could as a second-class citizen in a Muslim society, Maimonides expressed his displeasure with the decided lack of virtue in the way Muslims rule their societies and relate to one another.

Concerning Christianity, with which he probably had no real contact, Maimonides' views underwent a decided change over time. In his aversion to what he considered to be Christian dilutions of pure monotheism, especially in its doctrine of the Trinity, much of Maimonides' philosophical critique of Christian theology is similar to Islamic arguments against it. In his earlier work, Maimonides translated his theoretical disdain of Christianity into practice. He deemed Christians to be idolators and bemoaned the fact that political necessity forced many European Jews to live in Christian societies.

Nevertheless, this is not the whole picture. At the end of his great code, *Mishneh Torah,* in his discussion of the political-legal role of the Messiah-to-come, Maimonides makes a predictable concession to Islam, but a surprising concession to Christianity. He argues that despite the errors of Jesus and Muhammad, the religions that emerged from their respective teachings are instruments of divine providence for bringing all of humankind to the worship of the one true God. Now it is obvious from this concession to Christianity that he no longer regarded it to be a form of idolatry, the worship of a "strange" god. Surely no form of radical idolatry could possibly be the means for the universal spread of monotheism. (Ironically enough, the Christian censors of the printed editions of *Mishneh Torah* forced the publishers to remove that passage.)

Moreover, in a responsum written after the publication of *Mishneh Torah,* Maimonides rules that Jews may teach the Torah to Christians but not to Muslims because Christians believe Hebrew Scripture *in toto* to be the revealed word of God, whereas Muslims believe that primary text to be the Quran; for them, Hebrew Scripture is a flawed revelation. Thus Jews and Christians share a common revelation in a way that Jews share with no other religious community. Furthermore, Maimonides believes that Jews can best proselytize Christians because of this common text. All Jews need do is show Christians how they have misinterpreted that common text (the New Testament being the erroneous Christian interpretation or *midrash* he has in mind) and how Judaism's interpretation of it is ultimately more convincingly accurate. (Using the same logic, Christians have frequently regarded Jews as the most logical objects of their own proselytizing efforts.) The Jewish problem with Christianity, for Maimonides, is largely a matter of exegesis, and the differences there are more theoretical than practical. True idolators, on the other hand, could hardly have accepted Hebrew Scripture as the word of God.

So, what is Maimonides' legacy? For Jews, Maimonides is such a part of the tradition that he has long been inextricable from it. But he also has a legacy for those who are not part of these intimately Jewish conversations. That legacy, it seems to me, is his methodology. He was convinced that the highest human task, from the first humans in the Garden of Eden to the righteous in the world-to-come, is to pursue truth. Here and now that pursuit is to be conducted in the created order, which includes the historical communities in which we live and from whose members we have learned to speak, most importantly about God. That created order consists of the findings of reason and what revelation teaches. The way we understand our world and the way we understand revelation is the same. Such a process of understanding need not accept any obscurity from the authorities of the past. The human intellect is free to soar as long as it understands that a goal awaits its efforts and that it is responsible to the other humans similarly engaged—wherever and whenever they happen to have been situated. To claim to able to speak *de novo* about anything, much less about God, as Descartes and his followers have claimed, would have struck Maimonides as utterly unnatural.

It is a mistake of many current followers of Maimonides to think they can conduct the search for truth using the same tools he used. Maimonides relied on philosophical paradigms of his own day (especially cosmic teleology) that have long since lost their value for us at a different point in history. Indeed, Maimonides himself advised us to use the most coherent philosophical paradigms at hand, and for us that must include the findings of both the natural and the human sciences (including historical-critical

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research) that were not available to him and his age. In this sense, Maimonides would not have wanted us to be literal "Maimonideans"; he would have wanted us to imitate him more than follow him. At a time when it is fashionable for many intellectuals to dismiss the existence of truth altogether, Maimonides encourages us to search for truth, which is to search for God. His faith, both religious and philosophic, inspires us to believe with him that God has put us in this world for nothing less. FT

As Decreed

He waits outside the house in the car
for the boy to appear.
The monthly ritual as decreed;
the pick-up, the over-night stay.
He wonders what they'll do.

He notes the trim flower beds,
the grass more lush than he remembers,
the path, neatly swept.
All reproach him for old neglectful ways.

Her car's not there.

After five minutes he has to go
and ring the bell of the house
he used to live in;
has to see the new husband
his boy calls dad.

They talk about the weather and baseball
until the kid comes down the stairs
with his overnight bag.
Tall, lanky, almost fifteen
with an attitude.
Each time a little more distant.
Polite, but only just.

He wonders what they'll do
knowing it will be the same routine,
a stop at McDonald's, the usual questions
about school, the drive to his apartment
with the pull-out bed,
then watching the game on TV
to help fill in the long silences.

Kathleen du Haime

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Jews Choosing Life

Matthew Berke

The sanctity and infinite worth of every human being is a quintessential Jewish value, grounded in the biblical notion that man is made in the image and likeness of God. According to the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:5): "Whoever destroys one life is as if he destroyed a whole world, and whoever preserves a life is as if he preserved the whole world."

Against this background, it is ironic and vexatious for many pro-life activists that American Jews tend to line up on the "pro-choice" side in the struggle over abortion. "Affirming the Sanctity of Human Life," a conference held last November 12 in Washington, D.C., brought together a hundred or so Jews who are troubled by the Jewish community's stance toward the unborn, particularly concerning the gruesome late-term procedure known as "partial-birth abortion."*

The assembly was, if not representative, at least diverse: secular and religious, prominent public personages and private individuals, the well informed and those trying to become informed. Organized by Chris Gersten of the Washington-based Institute for Religious Values, and sponsored by a grant from Our Sunday Visitor Institute, a Catholic organization, the conference was held at the Catholic University of America. Even for someone accustomed to interreligious gatherings, the anomaly was striking. Happily, it was not of the "what's wrong with this picture" variety, but rather, what's *right* with it: ordinary Jews and rabbis of all denominations (several with long, hasidic-style beards) engaged in dialogue with each other and with the evangelical Protestant and Catholic pro-lifers in attendance. Only in America, one might say—and perhaps only when the issues truly involve life and death.

The morning session consisted of panel presentations by three Orthodox Jews and a maverick Reform rabbi. Marshall Breger, a law professor and political writer, lamented the fact that Jews support "abortion rights" more than any religious or ethnic group: they are consistently 15 to 20 percent above the norm, he said, even when controlling for various factors such as religious belief or unbelief, political ideology, social class, etc. He attributed this support, in part, to fears that governmental restrictions on abortion would abridge personal autonomy and impose Christian religious standards on Jewish life. He said that "gray areas" in Jewish law—its combination of silence and ambiguity regarding the fetus' status, its handful of exceptional situations allowing abortion—have confused Jews about the permissibility of abortion in general.

Barry Freundel, an Orthodox rabbi from Georgetown, seconded Breger's sociological account of Jewish fears about abortion as being "symbolic" of the wider Jewish culture clash with conservative Christian movements. "It's hard to have a conversation about abortion," he said, "that doesn't become a conversation about something else." Even among his own Orthodox congregants, Freundel said, his pro-life preaching is treated as the rabbi "getting up on his soapbox" again. Nevertheless, he said, he feels obliged to inform them that the absolute license to abort, as practiced in the United States today, is "simply impossible to reconcile" with traditional Jewish teaching. Judaism, he said, permits abortion in a few limited circumstances, such as to save the life of the mother. He indicated that there is some difference of rabbinic opinion about these circumstances, but stressed that there is no warrant for the overwhelming number of abortions now performed in the U.S. He said that classic Jewish sources really don't say much about the general moral or metaphysical status of the fetus; but, he added, we have an "intuitive re-

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sponse" that the fetus is "*not* like an appendix or an in-grown toe nail" that can simply be removed at will.

David Novak, a theologian and rabbi who holds a chair in Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto, further developed the theme that Jewish thinking on abortion tends to be less theoretical than practical. And the guide to practice is sometimes ambiguous: The great medieval teacher Rashi, for instance, implies in one case that the fetus has no rights, but elsewhere seems to imply the opposite. No Jewish source, however, accepts abortion for the purpose of birth control or sterility, a practice that "cheapens human life" and public morality. Novak suggested that Jewish casuistry regarding permissible versus impermissible abortions could leaven the general societal debate on this vexed issue. But he warned against having the Jewish witness be limited to pleading "exceptions" and hard cases; it is corrupting, he argued, to allow exceptional cases to dictate general rules, or, worse, to be the occasion for erasing rules altogether. Despite his emphasis on the practical over the metaphysical, Professor Novak did, finally, open the door to the kind of wider considerations assumed by Christian pro-life advocates when he spoke of Judaism's overall thrust toward "greater inclusiveness in the human community."

Yehuda Levin, an Orthodox rabbi from Brooklyn —a conference participant though not a panel member—said that the Orthodox community has a special responsibility to present to the wider public the authentic pro-natal, pro-life Jewish view on abortion. Levin, well known in the New York area for taking the conservative cultural agenda to the streets and to talk radio, said Jews are obliged not just to cultivate righteousness within their own community but also to be "a light unto the nations"; specifically, he argued, Orthodox institutions should lobby to protect life as earnestly as they seek tuition tax credits or vouchers for religious schools.

Clifford E. Librach, a Reform rabbi from Sharon, Massachusetts, picked up on the theme of greater inclusiveness. He turned the tables on his own liberal Reform movement, which frequently justifies changes in Jewish law on the grounds that the ancient rabbis lacked modern, scientific knowledge. What, then, Rabbi Librach asked, if the sages had known that, from the moment of conception, twenty-three chromosome pairs form the signature of each human being, or that a fetus exhibits brain waves at just ten weeks, or that fetuses are sensitive to music and human voices? Though the Reform movement has uncritically supported "abortion rights" in its political activities, Librach found a source of possible hope in its rabbinic wing, which has occasionally displayed a measure of moral seriousness on the issue. In 1996, for instance, it refused to give legal approval for an abortion to a couple that claimed giving birth to a handicapped child "would impose an undue hardship on their other children." According to the rabbinic responsum: "The secrets of God . . . are not knowable," and "We do not encourage abortion, nor favor it for trivial reasons, nor sanction it on demand." At other times, however, Librach noted, the Reform rabbinate exhibits pro-choice obfuscation, euphemism, and self-contradiction, as in its 1994 home prayerbook, which offers the following prayer "upon termination of a pregnancy": "Mother of all life: I need You. I need Your comfort and love; I yearn to rest my head on Your tender breast. Rock me in Your arms as I reflect upon the meaning of life and loss. . . . Awed by the creative powers within my body, I look back with sadness on the life that could not be."

Similar ambivalence characterizes the thinking of Conservative movement rabbis, Librach said. He quoted a 1998 Conservative rabbinic manual, whose section on "grieving ritual following termination of pregnancy" is hopelessly self-contradictory in its attitude toward the unborn: in some passages referring to the fetus as "a thing," a mere "stirring" or "seed" of life "that could not grow into a child" and therefore "could not be," but in other places as a "baby," even praying "Shelter this baby, O God, under Your care."

As part of a successful strategy to reduce abortion, Librach cited the need to celebrate the "autonomy" of the fetus and its potential for uniqueness and creativity. *Hesed*, the Hebrew word for lovingkindness, with its implication of self-sacrifice and surrender, should be part of the mother's attitude toward the unborn life within her, and of society's toward her in her dilemma. We must "acknowledge . . . the difficulty in addressing both the morality of the act [of abortion] and the fragile loneliness of the mother, who is both a person and a vessel . . . [and who] desperately needs a friend more than a lecture." He recalled God's solicitude for Hagar (in Genesis 16) as a model for our response to women who feel abandoned, bereft, and alone.

The luncheon speaker was actor Ben Stein, who argued for the importance of bringing the pro-life case to Hollywood's liberal Jewish elite. Though that elite is not particularly religious, it will, over the long term, take notice if groups of rabbis persistently argue against abortion and for life. Given that so many people take their cultural and moral cues from movies and TV, it is vital, he said, that Hollywood be converted to the pro-life cause. He expressed a wish that the TV series *Touched by an Angel* would have a pregnant young woman receive the message that the life inside her is a human being; that, he said, would be a cultural turning point. Already, he noted, there is some "upward seepage" of pro-life sentiment in Hollywood coming from the industry's blue-collar support people—grips, light men, hairdressers, make-up artists, and others.

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In the afternoon, there were two impassioned pleas for Jewish opposition to the late-term procedure frequently called "dilation and extraction" but commonly known as "partial-birth abortion." As the speakers all indicated, "partial-birth" is the more accurate description because labor is induced to the point that the majority of the body comes out the birth canal, while the head, still remaining inside, is punctured with scissors and the brain suctioned out by a catheter in order to facilitate removal of the collapsed skull. The procedure is, according to every speaker at the conference, clearly in violation of Jewish law, which says that if either a baby's head or the majority of its body emerges from the womb it is considered a human being and may not be harmed.

Sandi Merle, a Manhattan-based writer and founder of STOP (Standing Together Opposing Partial-birth), said recent election results and congressional votes seem to confirm that "American culture is becoming a culture of violence and death. Worst of all are the murders of convenience, very much like the killing of unwanted babies in the days of Moses. It is an infamous sign of human regression if we are to become the murderous pharaohs rather than the life-saving midwives. . . . As a people with a tribal memory, instinct tells us we must fight for the survival of those most vulnerable among us—in this case those without a voice, innocent unborn children." She called for educational efforts, political activism, and a simple truthfulness that doesn't try to "cleanse" or "sterilize" the reality of partial-birth abortion by describing it simply as a late-term abortion. "Be not afraid. Say the vile words: 'Partial-birth,' 'suction tubes,' 'infanticide,' 'murder.' Describe the procedure to all who will listen. Make them feel the scissors' thrust. Otherwise we will be meeting here again next year, and we will remain polite, and kind, and timid, and proper, and—I'm afraid—doomed."

Moses A. Birnbaum, a Conservative movement rabbi from Plainview, Long Island, was among the 450 rabbis who, under the sponsorship of the Institute for Religious Values, recently published an open letter to Jewish members of the U.S. Senate, urging an override of President Clinton's veto of a bill to ban partial-birth abortion. The National Council of Jewish Women countered with a pro-abortion letter signed by a group of 500 rabbis; but, Rabbi Birnbaum said, they were unable to refute either the medical or religious arguments of the original letter. Troubled by the idea that religiously knowledgeable Jews could sign such an anti-life document, Birnbaum concluded that "Many rabbis, difficult as it is to believe, are not aware of the horrific details of the partial-birth abortion procedure." Nevertheless, he said, he has been able to convert many of them to a pro-life position by explaining its details and assuring them that the legislation makes full provision to protect the life of the mother.

He said there is much misgiving and guilt in the Jewish community over partial-birth abortion, and people are hungering for an authentic Jewish response. Although Jews cannot, like Catholics, accept a total ban on all abortions, according to Rabbi Birnbaum, it is imperative to "unite with our Christian brothers and sisters" against partial-birth, "a procedure unique in its total violation of Jewish law" and "tantamount to infanticide." He said Jews should not worry about partial-birth legislation leading to a wider ban on abortion, but should consider one issue at a time. He decried the "mantra of choice," arguing that sometimes people must simply "choose life—the best choice of all, the only choice."

Rabbi Eliezer Goldstock of Brooklyn, a Lubavitcher hasid, criticized today's "morality of convenience" which is always "looking for an excuse" even as "children are being killed." Rabbi Goldstock, who is director of Heart to Heart—an agency that counsels women with unborn children of imperfect health to carry their pregnancies to term, gives post-birth assistance, and, where necessary, provides adoption services—said fetal handicap does not justify abortion, since we are all born with a grave handicap: our mortality.

Though the key conference participants and attendees were learned in Jewish law and tradition, one should not underestimate the importance of the ordinary Jews, whether religious or not, whose presence seemed to me a great sign of hope. If these Jews in all their diversity and independence could see the rightness of the pro-life cause (in whatever measure), so, I thought, might many others. As more and more Jews begin to feel comfortable discussing protection for the unborn, what was previously unthinkable becomes suddenly thinkable, even do-able. Education is key, Andrea Seawald, a social worker from Pittsburgh, told me; eventually there will have to be a national Jewish pro-life organization.

Conference organizer Chris Gersten thanked the pro-life movement and Catholic University for "creating space" for a specifically Jewish pro-life group that is unified, at least for now, only in its opposition to partial-birth abortion. That might be the beginning of a larger Judeo-Christian consensus on life, but to help end this one particularly heinous procedure would, in itself, be a great good. As Sandi Merle put it: "Ultimately, we will have to explain to our children, and our children's children. *L'dor va-dor*, from generation to generation, we may have to explain the evil that lives after us." FT

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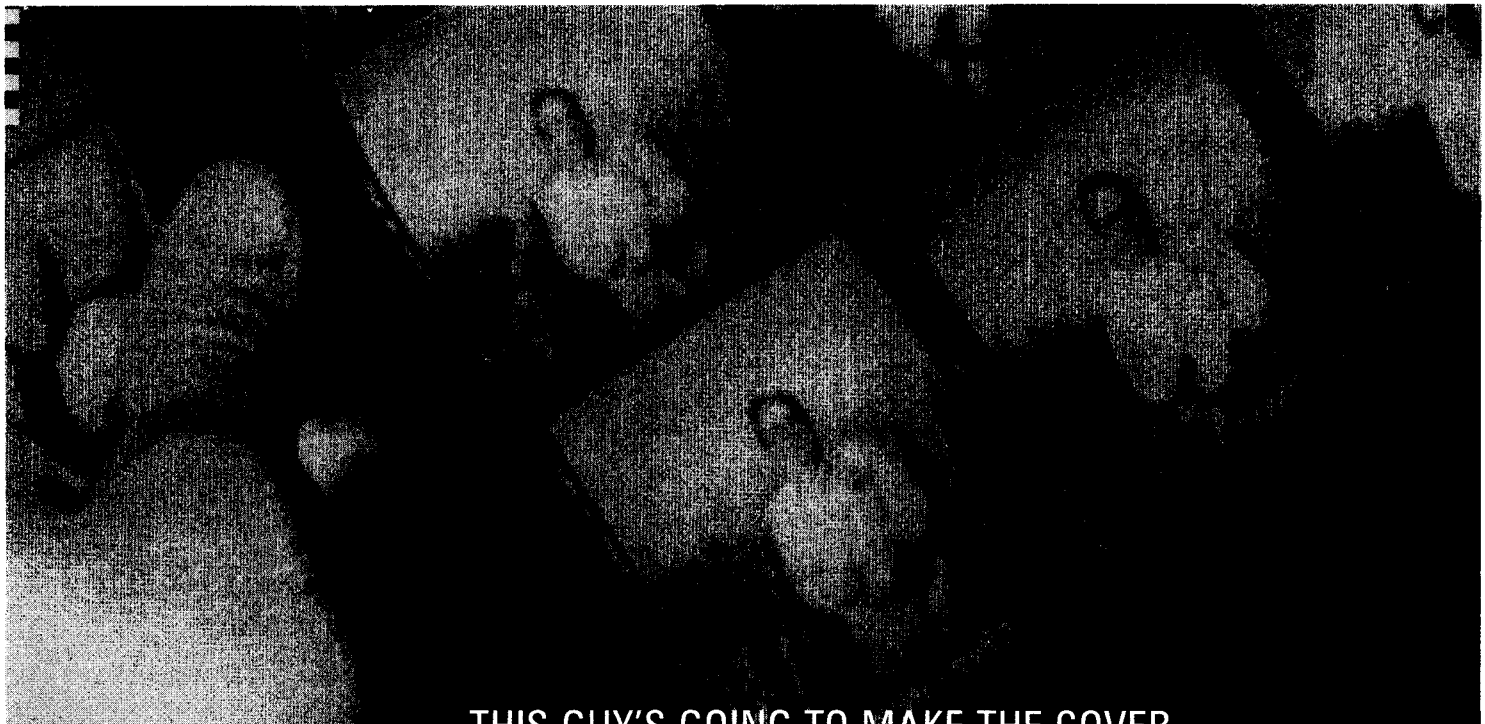

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>PEACE LOVE AND SOFTWARE STORY: FINDING THE NEXT BILL GATES

7/4
Josh McHugh's going forward with story on open source software. Heard about this guy Linus Torvalds. Linus is this sort of poster-child for the "freeware" movement. Did a quick name search on internet for kicks. This guy's got more hits than a movie star...but you'd have to talk to the geek elite to hear of him.

7/9
McHugh interviews Linus. Lunch at favorite cheap Thai place. This guy wrote original Linux program, but says it thrives because of work of thousands. Totally modest. Drives a Pontiac for God's sake. Love to get this guy on the cover...see something other than another glam piece on Bill Gates on the newsstand. That's the problem with running with the pack. It's so crowded that everyone puts the same joker on their covers.

7/14
Intel holds "Linux tech talk." Linus is on panel. Pretty obscure event, but there's a line out door and down block. Thousands of programmers there to see Linus. Reporters like McHugh love this stuff...they salivate over finding the guy no one's heard of and introducing him to the world. We've got our cover.

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Books In Review

Blessed Be

GODDESS UNMASKED: THE RISE OF NEOPAGAN FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY. By PHILIP G. DAVIS. *Spence. 418 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by **Charlotte Allen**

IT IS A DOGMA of feminist mythology that before there was God, there was Goddess. A very long time ago (so goes the story), when war, agriculture, and patriarchy were just glints in male chauvinists' eyes, human beings universally worshipped a Great Mother who was as fecund as the earth, as wise as Grandmother Willow in Disney's *Pocahantas*, and as religiously latitudinarian as the faculty at the Union Theological Seminary.

Goddess worship is everywhere in the literature and praxis of feminism. It shows up among the Paleolithic flint-chippers of Jean Auel's *Clan of the Cave Bear* novels set in circa 40,000 B.C. It shows up in Marion Bradley Zimmer's *Mists of Avalon*, which reconstructs the "historical" King Arthur as a sixth-century chieftain surrounded by blue-painted, free-thinking priestesses who specialize not only in communing with the Mother but in pre-RU-486 herbal abortions and assisted-suicide potions for the terminally ill. Feminist biblical scholars have found traces of the Goddess or her devotees in Lilith, in the Shekhinah, in the personification of divine wisdom (Sophia) in the Book of Proverbs, and even in Mary Magdalene (although not in the Virgin Mary, who is considered too nice).

CHARLOTTE ALLEN *is a contributing editor at* Lingua Franca *and teaches writing at Johns Hopkins University. Her book,* The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus *(Free Press), was published last spring.*

Nowadays, with phallocentric traditionalist Christianity presumably on the wane, devotion to the Goddess seems to be back: in the "feminist spirituality" movement that has permeated even the mainline churches, as well as among the "Wiccans" and self-styled "pagans" of the white-collar West who don Druid robes and light bonfires to keep the fertility festivals of the old Celtic calendar (minus the human sacrifice). An advice column in the *Washington Post* recently featured a query from a bride-to-be whose Christian fundamentalist parents refused to attend her Wiccan wedding. An article in a scholarly journal pondered the question: Can you be Jewish and a Goddess worshipper?

IN *Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality*, Philip G. Davis, a professor of religious studies at the University of Prince Edward Island, traces the current preoccupation with the Goddess all the way back to its roots. Those roots, he argues persuasively, turn out to be planted not in the misty terrain of prehistory but in the well-mapped soil of the early nineteenth century, when neopaganism itself was born, along with other manifestations of Romanticism, in reaction to the rationality-obsessed Enlightenment. Davis surveys the archaeological remains of the Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age cultures where feminists claim to have found signs of Goddess worship—caves in Western Europe, the Catal Hayuk settlement in Turkey, prehistoric Malta and the Balkans, and Minoan Crete—and finds little hard evidence to support their theories. Whereas anthropologists of a generation or so ago tended to assume that every painting or carving of a female image at an ancient site depicted an object of worship, their present-day successors are far more cautious about such ascriptions.

The ideologically driven scholarship of Gertrude Rachel Levy, Marija Gimbutas, Riane Eisler, Elinor Gadon, and Elizabeth Gould Davis —which has extrapolated from these artifacts not only a widespread cult of the Goddess in preliterate times, but an entire pacificist, egalitarian, woman-centered civilization—has been either dismissed outright or severely criticized by virtually all serious archaeologists working in the field today. Those sites have actually turned out to contain defense fortifications, masculine symbols, indicia of hierarchical social organization, and other evidence that life back then was neither so utopian nor so gynocentric as the feminists have made it out to be.

Furthermore, Wicca itself, the array of Goddess-centered, feminism-tinged, "good witch" religious rituals (no satanic pacts for them) practiced by such high-profile American witch-authors as Margot Adler (*Drawing Down the Moon*), Miriam "Starhawk" Simos (*The Spiral Dance*), and Zuzsanna Budapest (*The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries*), dates only to the 1950s. Although Wicca holds itself out as a primordial Stone Age religion that somehow survived centuries of Christian persecution, it is in fact largely the brainchild of Gerald Brousseau Gardner (1884-1964), an English autodidact who dabbled in nudism and seances before falling in with a group of Rosicrucians that styled itself a witches' coven carrying on a secret and nearly extinct tradition. Gardner had himself initiated into the coven in 1939, and in 1954 he published a book, *Witchcraft Today*, that serves as the Wiccan Baedeker. Gardner claimed merely to be passing on the secret lore he had learned from a witch named Old Dorothy (who was conveniently dead when his book appeared), but the consensus, even among his disciples, is that he more than likely made it all up or appropriated it from literary sources.

AT ANY RATE, such commonplaces of today's Wiccan practice as casting the circle, drawing down the moon, the ubiquitous epithet "blessed be," and "skyclad" ceremonial nudity all seem to be pure

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Gardnerian inventions. A lover of archaisms, Gardner even coined the name "Wicca," which he erroneously believed to be a cognate of the Anglo-Saxon word *wis* for "wise" (*wicca* is actually the Anglo-Saxon word for a male wizard—*wicce*, "witch," is its feminine equivalent—deriving from *wigle*, meaning "divination"). Gardner probably borrowed the Wiccan Golden Rule, "An ye harm none, do what ye will," from his friend the black-magician and sexual ritualist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), whose maxim was "'Do what thou wilt' shall be the whole of the law." (Crowley, an early avatar of Marilyn Manson, was famous for baptizing a frog Jesus Christ and crucifying it onstage during one of his orgiastic rites.)

Like Wicca, the Goddess herself was largely a male creation. Davis locates her origins in the Romantic exaltation of emotion over reason, leading to an idealization of women as repositories of pure emotion and, hence, an intuitive higher morality that superseded the legalistic systems devised by men. Women were also sources of awesome spiritual power—"the eternal feminine." Goethe's *Faust* featured "the Mothers," nameless but potent female deities linked to a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In 1861, Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815-1887), a law professor at the University of Basel, published a vastly influential book, *Das Mutterrecht* (*The Mother-Right*), which postulated that human society had once been both universally matriarchal and devoted to the worship of powerful agricultural goddesses who survived as minor deities of earth and moon in the polytheistic patriarchies that supplanted the matriarchies (the Greek goddess Demeter—"earth mother"—being a prime example).

A year later, Jules Michelet (1798-1874), a historian at the College de France, published *La Sorcière* (*The Witch*), contending that witchcraft had been the original religion of Europe, a priestess-led cult of nature and fertility that flourished underground throughout the Middle Ages as a refuge for women, especially peasant women, oppressed by their husbands, their feudal overlords, and the Church. *La Sorcière* was read widely for decades, feeding into a taste for the occult, the esoteric, and the anticlerical that thrived among the nineteenth-century intelligentsia.

BETWEEN THEM, Bachofen and Michelet were the intellectual progenitors of Goddess spirituality generally and Wicca specifically. Bachofen's ideas influenced not only Friedrich Engels, who incorporated the defeat of the matriarchy into Marxism, but Carl Jung and later, Joseph Campbell, who viewed the myth of the powerful earth or moon goddess as a universal human archetype. James Frazer used Bachofen's suppositions about matrilineality and the early supremacy of agricultural goddesses in his famous *Golden Bough*, as did Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928), who contended in her 1903 book *Prologomena to the Study of Greek Religion* that all the goddesses of Greek mythology had been just one goddess during pre-Hellenic, matriarchal times. The *Prolegomena* and *The Golden Bough* were the chief sources for Robert Graves' *White Goddess* (1947), arguably the most influential work of Goddess theology of all time. Graves painted an idyllic picture of prehistoric Mediterranean life in which the Triple Goddess (virgin, mother, and crone) was the sole deity, women ruled, and human beings of both sexes were in tune with nature, poetry, and the life-force.

Michelet, for his part, influenced Margaret Murray (1863-1963), an anthropologist and historian who combined the theories of *La Sorcière* with those of *The Golden Bough* in a series of books (the most famous was *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, published in 1921) arguing that the rituals of witchcraft embodied those of primitive Celtic sacrificial cults, and that witchcraft rivaled Christianity until the witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries decimated its ranks (but did not destroy it entirely). Murray in turn influenced Gardner and his Wicca; she wrote an enthusiastic foreword to *Witchcraft Today*.

Like the work of other Goddess-advocates, Murray's witchcraft studies have been thoroughly demolished by mainstream historians, who agree that some pre-Christian folklore survived the Christianization of Europe, but nothing resembling an organized pagan religion. This has not prevented her theories' enthusiastic incorporation into feminist mythology. "Nothing about the Goddess myth correlates with what we know of the ancient civilizations which her devotees claim as their foremothers; everything, however, has clearly identifiable roots in the modern subcultures which began with Romanticism and the nineteenth-century occult revival," Davis writes. "It is not Crete, Malta, the Balkans, Lycia, and Greece that bequeathed the Goddess to us, but . . . Michelet, Bachofen, . . . and Gardner."

DAVIS' BOOK has its flaws. His is a history of ideas, but he takes a topic-by-topic approach that makes it difficult to trace some of the intellectual fashions he discusses from their Romantic beginnings to their Wiccan culmination. Even more annoyingly, he regularly introduces us to books before introducing us to their authors. His concluding chapter consists of a digressive if perhaps worthily motivated polemic against "diversity" politics, the violence-against-women industry, and other topics unrelated to his larger subject. In general, *Goddess Unmasked* has a superficial, off-the-cuff tone that reads more like a romp through Davis' lecture notes than a probe of the occult-obsessed corners of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectual life.

Nonetheless, he has done his homework and knows his arcane material thoroughly. I closed his book hungry to read more about the eccentric passel of poets, moun-

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tebanks, magicians, and philosophers (mostly men) who created the Goddess and passed her off to the feminists as prehistoric. Blessed be.

Man as Lucifer

THE INVENTION OF AUTONOMY: A HISTORY OF MODERN MORAL PHILOSOPHY. BY J. B. SCHNEEWIND. *Cambridge University Press. 624 pp. $69.95 cloth, $24.95 paper.*

Reviewed by **Gilbert Meilaender**

THE AUTONOMY WHOSE invention J. B. Schneewind explores in this long and magisterial history of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century moral philosophy is Kantian autonomy. Yet, this is chiefly a book about Kant's predecessors. By studying them in detail, Schneewind hopes, as it were, to recreate the questions that must have been in Kant's mind, the problems he was considering, when he developed his notion of autonomy, which has had such a profound influence on the modern world. It is important to note that Kant is, on this account, not the "discoverer" but the "inventor" of autonomy, and Schneewind is clear about his own admiration for the accomplishment. He writes that Kant's "conception of morality as autonomy provides a better place to start working out a contemporary philosophical understanding of morality than anything we can get from other past philosophers."

This book has other aims as well,

GILBERT MEILAENDER *holds the Board of Directors Chair in Theological Ethics at Valparaiso University.*

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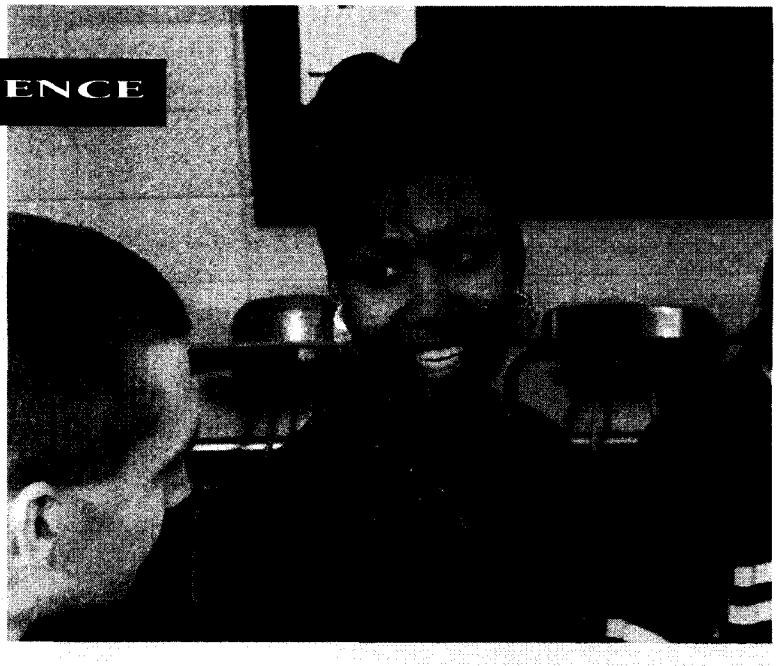

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however. It is also about how to do moral philosophy. And Schneewind's answer is: historically. In a concluding epilogue that is both fascinating and rather hard to connect with the main lines of the rest of the book, Schneewind distinguishes between two ways in which the history of moral philosophy has been understood—which he terms "the Socrates story" and "the Pythagoras story."

According to the Socrates story, moral philosphy seeks to teach us how to live well and rightly. Socrates broke with his predecessors by turning his attention away from nature and things in general to human life in particular. Unfortunately, when we take up the question of how we ought to live, we quickly discover that there are many different answers given. The task of moral philosophy becomes, then, the investigation of these answers, with the aim of finding a sure foundation for moral knowledge. The history of philosophy plays a role in that investigation, because it alerts us to the questions that need our attention.

According to the Pythagoras story, our situation is quite different. Most of us more or less know the basic moral truths; hence, moral philosophy cannot be a search for previously unknown information about how we ought to live. Rather, it seeks to help us become more virtuous—that is, to overcome the vices that keep us from doing what everyone knows we ought to do. Some of the Christian Fathers held such a view. Believing, as they did, that this general knowledge of basic moral truths was grounded in God's covenant with Noah, they were naturally puzzled that the Greeks, when they started to philosophize, should have done as well as they did. How did the Greeks manage that without the Noachite revelation? The answer, many concluded, was that Pythagoras, first among the Greeks to study moral philosophy, had actually been a Jew, who had perhaps learned the foundations of morality from Ezekiel. On this view, moral philosophy is not so much the at-

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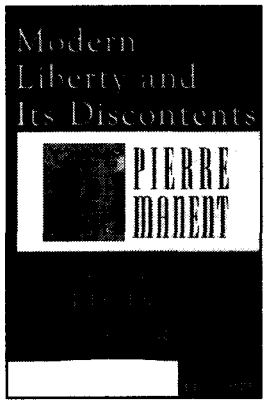

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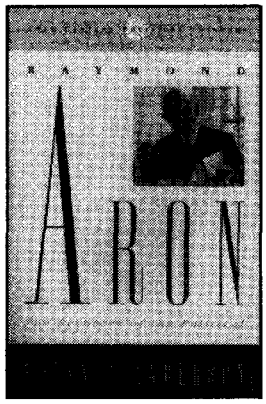

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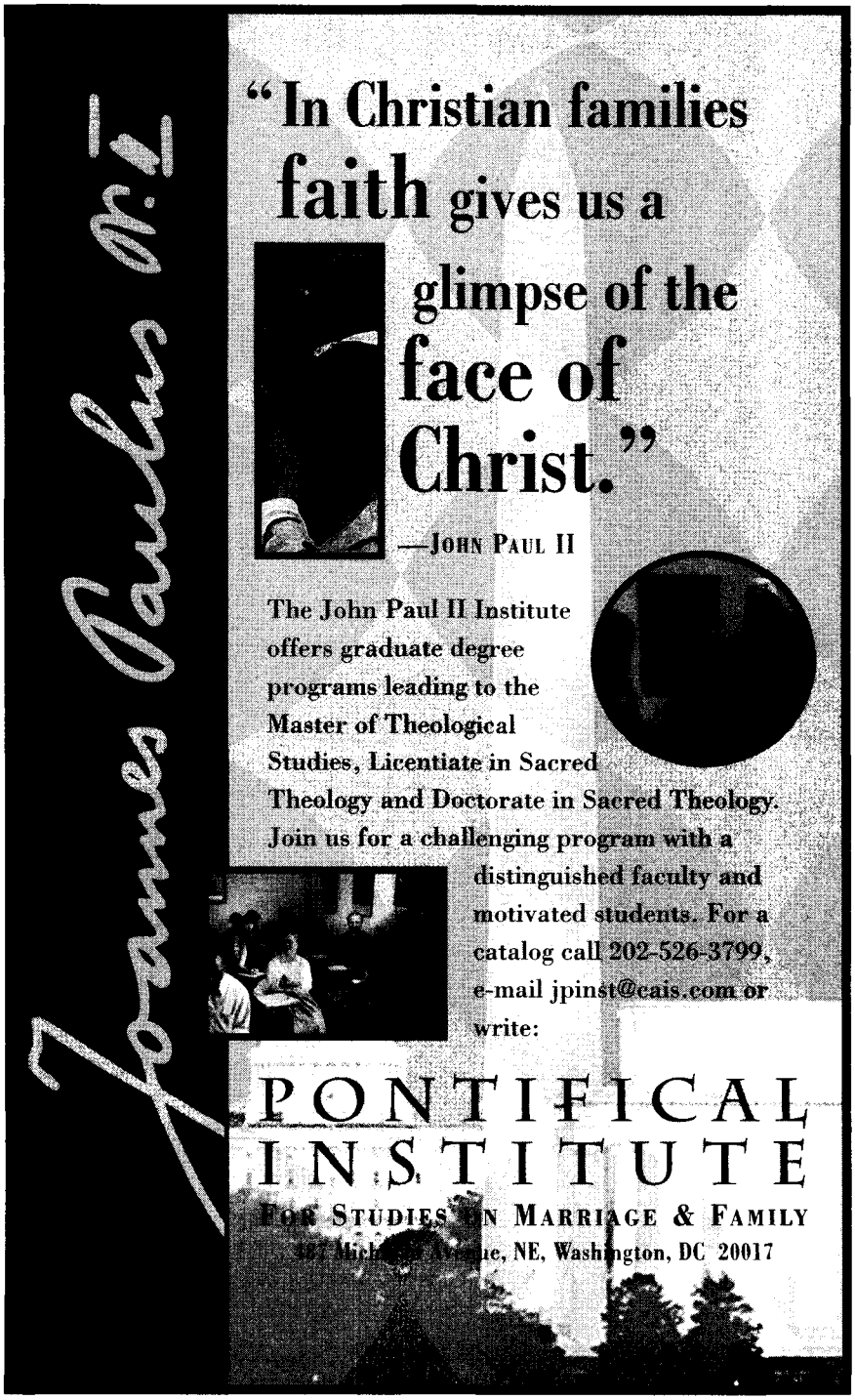
tempt to make progress in our moral knowledge as it is the constant struggle to remember and act upon what we already know. Moreover, the Pythagoras story offered a way to keep morality connected with revelation (and God), and, according to Schneewind, "some version or other of the Pythagoras story . . . must have been assumed, however indistinctly, by a great many philosophers" (who did connect morality and religion).

From Schneewind's perspective, these two stories, different as they are, remain alike in one important way. Each supposes that moral philosophy has a single aim, though the aims are different in the respective stories (to provide the foundation for morality, to reclaim the human moral inheritance). By contrast, Schneewind argues—or at least suggests—that there is no single aim that can unite what all moral philosophers do. Anyone who looks historically at Schneewind's account of what moral philsophers have in fact done will, he thinks, have to conclude this. Seeking to unearth some single aim, we inevitably distort our predecessors by reading them with our own aims in mind. We draw them into our projects and concerns when, in fact, we should be trying "to understand them in terms they themselves had available." They were not all trying to solve the same problem, and, hence, we cannot write the history of moral philosophy as if it were a story of progress (or regress). Something like this is what Schneewind tries to do for Kant. Of course, on this account it will be harder to know why we should care about or expect to be instructed by the story Schneewind tells in such lavish detail. He sees this, of course, and tries to uphold the continued importance of the history he recounts and of Kant in particular. Nevertheless, there is an undeniable sense in which the book ends not with a bang but a whimper.

AS A HISTORY of moral philosophy this book can be read as a sustained response to Alasdair MacIntyre's work. Thus, for example, MacIntyre depicts the notion of self-governance as having emerged from an "Enlightenment project" that tried to show that morality had no need of religion and could rely on its own foundations. Schneewind tells the story quite differently. There were, on his account, many "enlightened" thinkers who, though they wanted to limit God's control over life, did not disbelieve in his existence, which they thought was, in fact, essential for morality. Hence, both religious and antireligious thinkers contributed to the morality of autonomy.

The bulk of the book consists, therefore, in painstakingly detailed "readings" of Kant's predecessors—some very well known, others now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relatively obscure. Schneewind groups these thinkers into four main phases that constitute the development of modern moral philosophy. In natural law morality (grounded in reasoning from experience) and in "perfectionism," its principal seventeenth-century alternative (an emphasis on self-perfection maintaining that as we perfect ourselves we will see more clearly the moral harmony God intends for human life), God remained essential to morality. In the eighteenth century, however, many philosophers tried to show that it was possible for morality to get along without God—that morality, without making reference to "pleasing God" or "conforming to God's will," can and should teach us how to preserve and foster human happiness. For them the issue often becomes how and why, without a connection to God, morality can still move us. The stage is set then for Kant and his most immediate predecessors, who conclude that human beings must be capable of self-governance.

Schneewind's alternative to MacIntyre's account of the devolution and fragmentation of morality begins, therefore, with Aquinas and proceeds to Kant. Because the various chapters in which Schneewind unfolds his account are, in fact, told in such painstaking detail, a reader is likely to get much more from some chapters than from others. Paradoxically, we profit more from chapters about thinkers whom we already know well. It is much harder to profit from chapters about those we have never read. That is because the work reads rather like a detailed commentary, and one almost needs the text side by side with the commentary. Consequently, this may not be a book to read from start to finish, and yet without doing so one cannot really get a full sense of Schneewind's story. That unresolved methodological tension lies at its heart. As an exercise in communication it, perhaps inevitably, is flawed.

THE PLOT OF the story, its central turn, is from morality conceived in terms of obedience to morality conceived in terms of self-governance. Just as important, this turn applies to all moral agents, not just a few. All have "equal moral competence." That is, all are assumed to be capable of self-governance. They do not need instruction from authorities of one sort or another in order to understand the moral law: All of us, on this view, have an equal ability to see for ourselves what morality calls for and are in principle equally able to move ourselves to act accordingly, regardless of threats or rewards from others. These two points have come to be widely accepted—so widely that most moral

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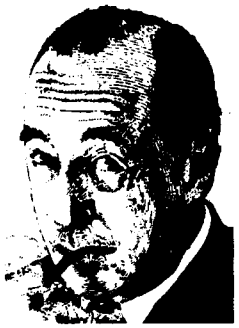
philosophy now starts by assuming them. . . . We assume, in short, that people are equally competent as moral agents unless shown to be otherwise. There are many substantive points on which modern moral views differ from what was widely accepted at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but our assumption of prima facie equal moral competence is the deepest and most pervasive difference.

Here we need the contrast with MacIntyre's work to remind us of something very important. MacIntyre noted in *After Virtue* that we have come to think of "anyone and everyone not actually mentally defective" as equal moral agents—exactly what Schneewind says. But MacIntyre also reminds us that it will be difficult, on such an account of moral philosophy, to make place for the virtues and for the claim that only those agents whose character has been shaped in certain ways will be discerning moral agents, able to see the truth about the moral life. If the assumption is that all adult reasoners (however we mark adulthood and making allowance for disabilities) are equally competent moral agents, then it will not be true that virtues such as justice, temperance, or love are necessary for us really to see what morality requires. Yet, a theory of the virtues—renewing an older emphasis on the epistemological significance of self-perfection—reminds us that without such virtues we may be unable to turn from the facts as we would like them to be to the facts as they are.

It is true, of course, that it may be good politics to assume that all adults are of "equal moral competence," but this only shows the degree to which in Schneewind's account a (laudable) political assumption has shaped the modern understanding of ethics. We have become almost unable to distinguish between ethics and politics, making moral discussion a process of negotiation between those who must be presumed to be of equal moral competence. Although they may not agree on countless matters, they have to live together; morality then becomes a search for ways to live cooperatively, and everything depends on who has the most votes. That is the underside of the story Schneewind tells, and we do well not to forget it.

THE STORY CULMINATES in Kant. Schneewind does not suppose, of course, that Kant himself had actually read all the thinkers whom the book has discussed, but that their work provides the necessary background for understanding the questions (and answers) that were im-



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portant to Kant. We are self-governing, Kant claims, *because* we are autonomous. That is, we legislate the moral law for ourselves. Kant offers us the exact opposite of a morality of obedience. The ground of our moral responsibility does not lie in an obligation to obey God, and Kant is utterly opposed to servility. One person cannot be obligated by the commands of another (not even God)—not, at any rate, if human dignity and self-respect are to mean anything. "The mature Kant," Schneewind writes, "does not hesitate to make an explicit comparison between human agents and God." To be as free as God, legislating for ourselves, is the heart of human dignity. Accurate and helpful as this depiction is, once we have followed the story to this point we may be less sure than Schneewind that Kant should really be called the inventor of such a vision of human autonomy. For, as Iris Murdoch once put it, "Kant's man had already received a glorious incarnation nearly a century earlier in the work of Milton: his proper name is Lucifer."

At any rate, in vindicating self-governance Kant seeks in his own way to make space for God, assigning God "the task of assuring us that we live in a morally ordered universe, one in which virtue is, ultimately, rewarded and vice punished." In this way it turns out that the world may perhaps be big enough for both us and God. But God can—and should!—do no more than assure us of a kind of moral symmetry in the world. "Because moral perfection is a condition of the will, we can strive for it only for ourselves. The moral perfection of others cannot be our business; their happiness can and should be."

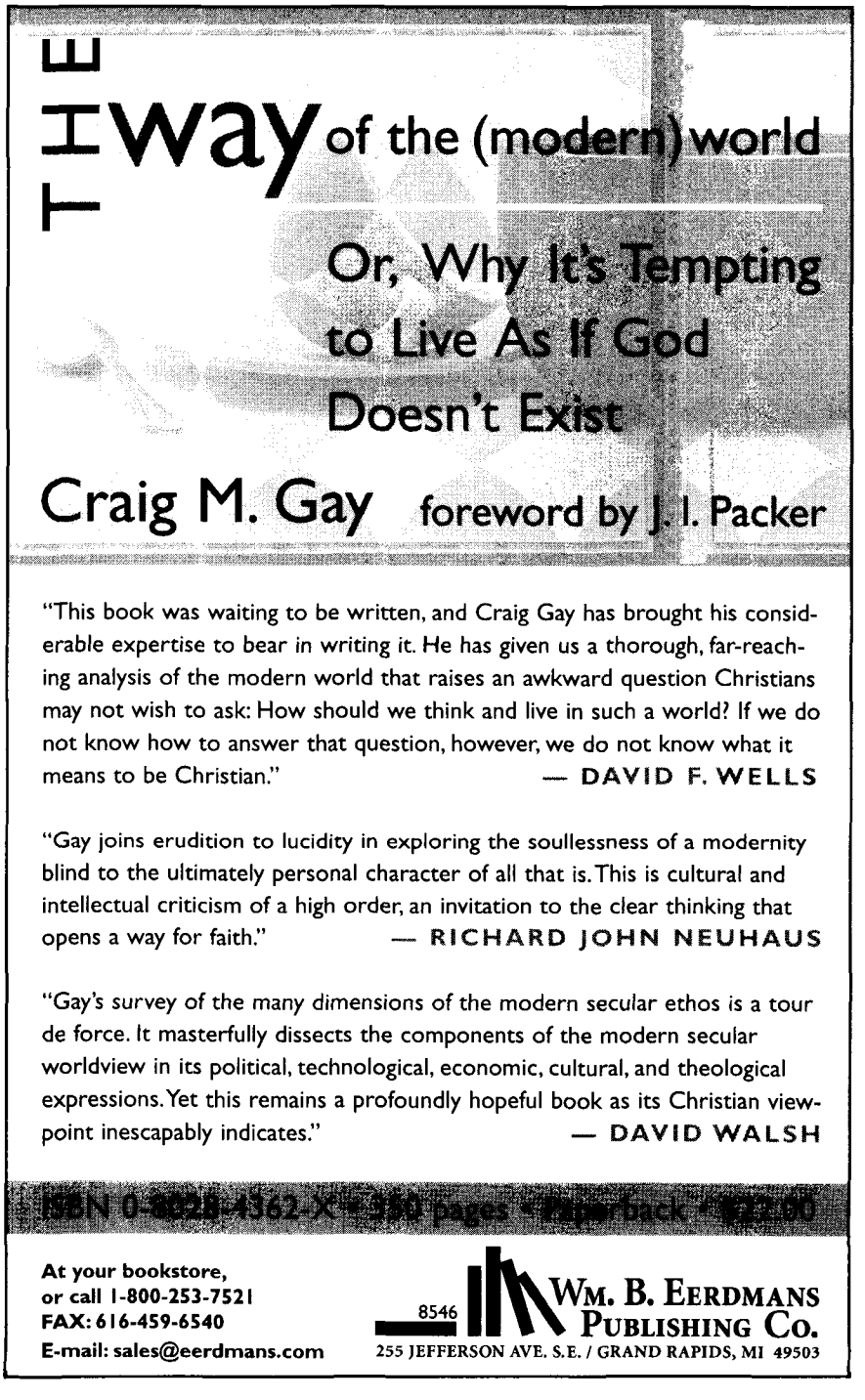
Here again we see imported into ethics a principle of modern politics—namely, that our concern for others can only be for whether they are harmed or helped, not whether they act rightly or wrongly, are virtuous or vicious. And what is a bit dubious even as a political principle is, of course, positively devastating when transformed by Kant into the basis of morality. "The moral perfection of others cannot be our business; their happiness can and should be." Granting all the complexities involved in the task of transmitting virtue while respecting human freedom, one must respond: This could only have been written by a childless man.

A Third Way?

SUMMER FOR THE GODS: THE SCOPES TRIAL AND AMERICA'S CONTINUING DEBATE OVER SCIENCE AND RELIGION. EDWARD J. LARSON. *Basic. 318 pp. $25 cloth, $14.95 paper.*

***Reviewed by* Carol Iannone**

IF THERE ARE MOMENTS in history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when "the road not taken" might have changed the course of events, the famous "Monkey Trial," held in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925, may have been one of them. According to Edward J. Larson's scholarly, informative, Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion*, the prosecution of young John Scopes for presumedly violating a state law restricting the teaching of evolution in the public schools need not have resulted in the now legendary high-pitched standoff between the atheistic radical Clarence Darrow and the robustly religious populist William Jennings Bryan. There was a third way of moderation between the two extremes, argues Larson, but it faded rapidly as the heat of the controversy grew more intense.

CAROL IANNONE *teaches in the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University.*

A professor of history and law at the University of Georgia, Larson begins by relating how the debate over Darwinism unfolded in America in the early part of the century, and developed into the warfare between science and religion that exploded in the trial (and continues to this day). By the twenties, evolution and its attendant implications had become a subject of consuming popular interest. Audiences thronged the Chautauqua circuits to hear the colorful orators of the day on both sides of the controversy, and crowded into lecture halls for formal debates on such propositions as, "Resolved, That the earth and all life upon it are the result of evolution." The popular press did its best to pit the modernists and the fundamentalists against each other and to avoid the moderates who might cool things down.

AFTER LAYING this groundwork, Larson gives a full account of the developments leading up to the trial, the trial itself, and the afterlife the trial has had in American culture, from the well-known play and film, *Inherit the Wind*, to the surprising folk history that arose around Bryan in the South, complete with songs and ballads, to the subsequent litigation over the conflict between creationism and evolution in the schools.

Many of Scopes' supporters, and many of Bryan's enemies, Larson shows, believed in the middle ground, that the Bible and evolution are compatible. Evolution could be seen as God's method of creation, and the Genesis account of creation taken as an allegory, they said. Let us hear from men who "think that God has shown his divinity in the . . . book of nature," declared Scopes lawyer Arthur Garfield Hays, "quite as much as in

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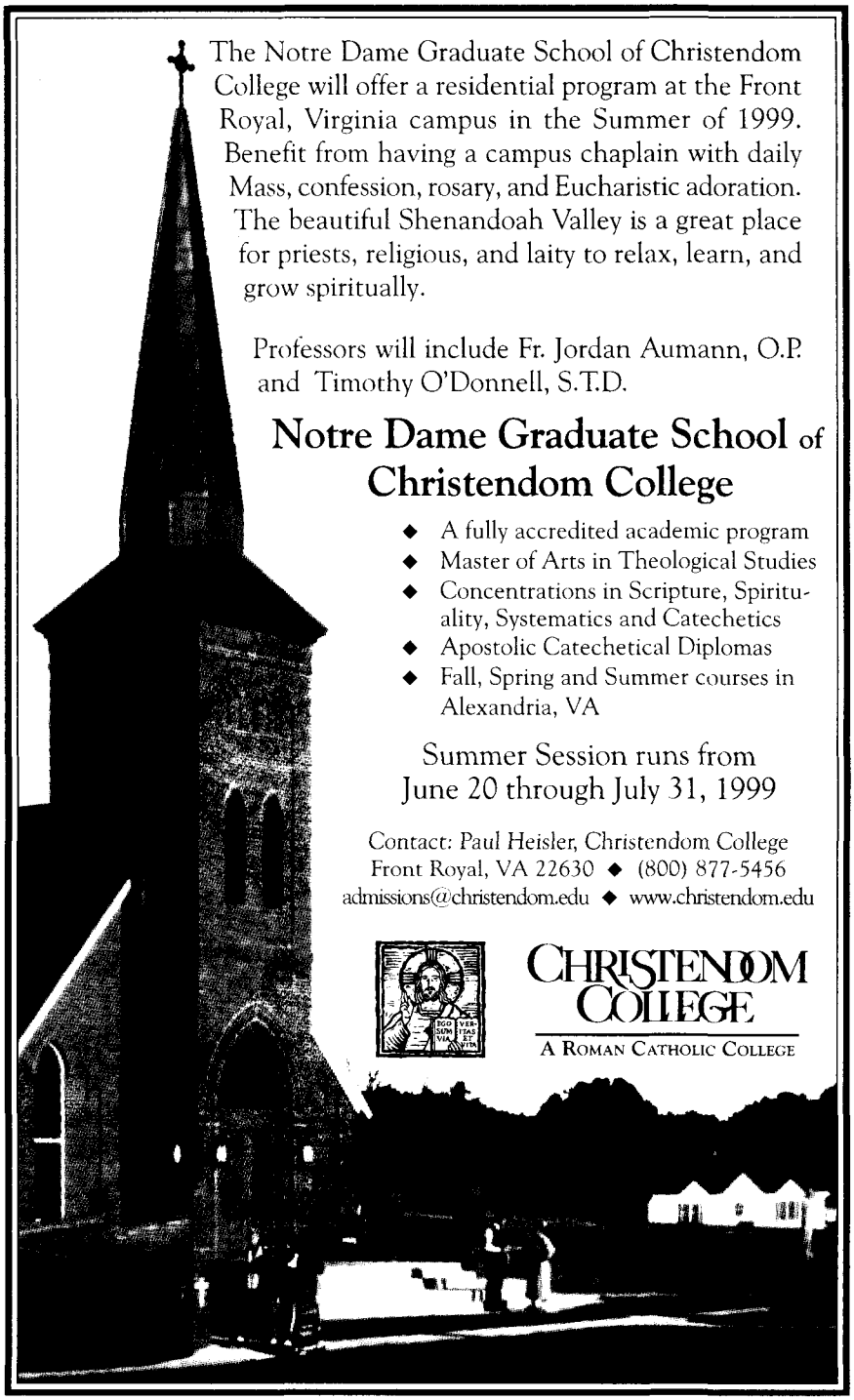
the book of the revealed word."

But the middle ground was virtually lost in the larger debate when Clarence Darrow took over as the head of Scopes' defense team. So far from being the the valiant defense attorney who stood for the integrity of the human mind even while maintaining respect and affection for religion and the Bible, as portrayed in *Inherit the Wind,* Darrow was rabidly anti-religious and anti-Christian, and not even much interested in freedom of speech. If he did occasionally invoke the latter, Larson points out, it was more to secure a general dispensation of "tolerance" that would make impossible any judgment, discrimination, or punishment. For Darrow was a radical determinist who believed that human beings are the product of evolution and heredity and cannot therefore be held accountable for their deeds. He did not even understand evolution, according to Larson, but pounced on it to support his social views and "to undermine popular religious faith." Darrow "called himself an agnostic," Larson writes,

> but in fact he was effectively an atheist. In this he imitated his intellectual mentor, the nineteenth-century American social critic, Robert G. Ingersoll, who wrote, "The Agnostic does not simply say, 'I do not know [if God exists].' He goes another step, and he says, with great emphasis, that *you* do not know. . . . He is not satisfied with saying that you do not know—he demonstrates that you do not know, and he drives you from the field of fact."

Thus Walter Lippmann could write directly after the trial that "Mr. Darrow . . . has done more to stimulate 'anti-evolution' legislation in the United States than Mr. Bryan . . . left alone, could have hoped for."

Bryan, today seen as a once-progressive man who nevertheless stood for chaining American education—and the American mind—to a laughable biblical literalism, was a more complex figure than that. He understood evolution better than Darrow and saw that it was only hypothesis, not proven theory. And as a populist, he felt that taxpayers had the right to control the content of their children's education. (He was not proposing that Christian views be taught in the schools, but that atheistic and secularist views not be taught either.) Finally, he objected to the teaching of evolution, especially with regard to the origin of man, because he felt that it led to the rise of ugly ideas like eugenics and social Darwinism, and furthermore discouraged any hope for the progress of mankind.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Bryan was not a biblical literalist, but he nevertheless eschewed the middle ground as much as Darrow, Larson writes. He tried to get Christians to see, in effect, that there *was* no middle ground; evolutionary theory, with its features of random variation and natural selection, could not but deny the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God Christians professed to believe in. Bryan knew that the so-called religious scientists who were insisting on the compatibility of evolution and the Bible would have surprised many Americans with the extent of how much of revelation they did *not* believe (such as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection), even as they professed a kind of general religious faith.

The more we learn about evolution and the Scopes Trial, the better Bryan looks. Wasn't he right? Is there really a middle road? Or was there instead something inexorable about the way science and religion came to loggerheads at Dayton in 1925? David Berlinski and Phillip E. Johnson are exposing the weaknesses of the Darwinian hypothesis, while intelligent design theorists like Michael Behe are providing evidence that intimates the hand of a Creator, calling into question the idea that species developed solely by chance.

None of these thinkers will support as scientifically tenable the literal account of Genesis to which fundamentalists still cling, of course. But neither do their findings support a so-called third way. These findings go mainly to making the negative case against some parts of Darwinism, but such critiques still leave us, as Bryan saw, with the descent of species through the survival of the fittest. Occasional pockets of intelligent design do not extend to the whole evolutionary mechanism. Pope John Paul II seems, at least on some readings, to have put his authority behind what is being called "theistic evolution," but this is simply not spiritually acceptable for many who wonder how they can reconcile a loving and benevolent Father God with the cruel, monstrous saga of evolution, riddled with waste and destructiveness.

Bryan is being proved right in other ways as well, as we can glean from Larson's fair and meticulous recounting of other fatal crossroads that were encountered in the circumstances surrounding the Scopes Trial. The American Civil Liberties Union originally had no objection to a general Christian outlook in the public schools, as long as it was that of no particular sect. By the time of the Scopes Trial, however, the ACLU and other bastions of secularism insisted that public education must not assume any religious outlook, laying the groundwork, as

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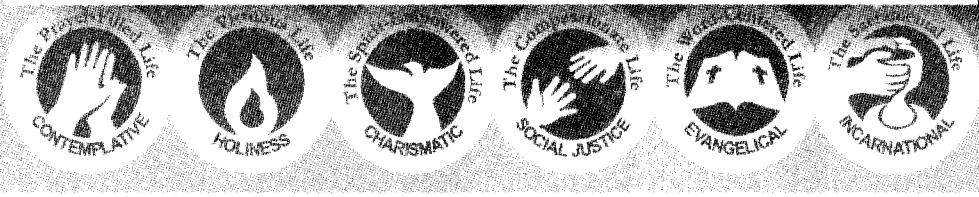

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Bryan feared, for the triumph of materialism.

BRYAN HIMSELF was a champion of the common man, and had actually supported two of the ACLU's earlier campaigns against threats to individual liberty—superpatriotism during World War I and cutthroat capitalism afterward—but the Scopes Trial and the subsequent treatment of it made him anathema to most of the liberal *bien pensant* left. The hundredth anniversary of the Cross of Gold Speech passed without so much as a mention at the 1996 Democratic Convention. But interestingly, in a short recent piece in the *New York Times*, Michael Kazin professed admiration for Bryan and his true populist understanding of wealth, and wondered where the populists are today who can make the case as he did. Democrats, liberals, and would-be populists are finding that, because of the left's hysterical campaign against religion, one of their best allies has been discredited.

In some ways, America seems to be only just learning the truth of the Scopes Trial and the implications of the debate over evolution. Even if Edward J. Larson does not convince us of the middle way, his book is a crucial piece of the educational process.

A Public Prophet?

FOR THE NATIONS: ESSAYS EVANGELICAL AND PUBLIC. JOHN HOWARD YODER. *Eerdmans. 240 pp. $28.*

Reviewed by **Jorge Garcia**

THIS BOOK COLLECTS twelve essays, most of them previously unpublished, by the eminent Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, who died at age seventy just before New Year's Day 1998 [see Stanley Hauerwas, "Remembering John Howard Yoder," FT, April 1998]. A student of Karl Barth in Europe, Yoder's long academic career had culminated in tenure within the ecumenical confines of the University of Notre Dame's theology department. I knew Yoder only slightly, from a few ethics discussion groups and chance meetings in the faculty office corridors and along the campus iceways when we both taught at Notre Dame. I remember him as a large, imposing figure with a heavy beard and a countenance that seemed grave even when he smiled.

Yoder is best known for his effort to reconceive the relation between Christianity and the state, and this work carries that project forward. If its subtitle relates it to Yoder's other recent collection of essays,

JORGE GARCIA *is Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers Univeristy.*

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The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical, then its title marks it as a kind of response to *Against the Nations,* a book by Yoder's friend (and former colleague at Notre Dame), Stanley Hauerwas. Hauerwas embraces a "sectarian" position of a sort often associated with Yoder's novel articulation of traditional Mennonite withdrawal from the world. As its introduction and initial group of essays (mostly from the nineties) make clear, *For the Nations* is Yoder's effort to voice his misgivings about the label "sectarian" and the substantive position he thinks it identifies. To Yoder, "sectarian" connotes "cutting off community" and that misleadingly suggests that Christians may properly isolate themselves from the wider society around them, leaving it to its own devices, so long as they are left to theirs. Instead, Yoder advocates a position he characterizes as "evangelical" in the root sense of bearing the gospel's good news to the world, especially by the example of the kind of life lived in that Christian community with which Yoder identifies *ekklesia.* It is unclear whether this "evangelical" position really contradicts anything Hauerwas' "sectarianism" asserts: both are antinationalist, both oppose the political and religious status quo in the West, and both emphasize the distinctiveness of Christian communities as camps of "resident aliens" within modernist, pluralist societies. The confrontation with Hauerwas, though, is never direct.

Yoder's evangelicalism is not that of the modern evangelical movement. Though several of these papers were written at the invitation of evangelical groups, who apparently consider Yoder within their circle, Yoder himself is characteristically ambivalent about them and their movement. He says, for example, that the emphasis of Billy Graham that spiritual conversion can help us face life's difficulties "is not wrong; it is right," but immediately adds that it misses the point of the Gospels. I say this is characteristic because Yoder seems to have been unable to feel completely at home even within his own denomination. Here, he trenchantly criticizes the Mennonites both for their practice of social withdrawal (pointing out that Jesus himself went the opposite direction, abandoning his craft and leaving small-town life for a life of preaching consummated in the big city) and for their history of securing possibly compromising protection from the politically powerful.

THESE COLLECTED ESSAYS, treating diverse subjects, were mostly written on request for conferences or seminars of various sorts, beginning in the mid-1960s. Yoder's introduction acknowledges draw-

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backs in publishing them in one place—these include repetition, inconsistency across "chapters" placed together but written at points far apart in time or authorial thinking, the absence of a developing line of argument, and changing "voice" and assumptions as different audiences are addressed. He expresses hope that by showing how his view has responded to diverse topics suggested by others, its inherent consistency will manifest itself. This hope is fulfilled to a surprising extent.

YODER CAN WRITE in an oddly pedantic way, avoiding straight answers. Thus, rather than saying whether he considers himself an evangelical Christian, Yoder discusses three senses of "the adjective 'evangelical.'" Since he never clarifies which apply to him, and since the question is really about whether he is *an* evangelical, this pedantry has the effect of obscuring things rather than clarifying them. Sometimes, this mode descends into caricature. Yoder laboriously points out, for example, that a certain book, despite using the term in its subtitle, is not a "primer" in any of five dictionary senses, including that the book is neither a first coat of paint nor an initial draft of water through a pump!

More important than this quirk, the language and preoccupations of several essays betray their origins in the sixties. For Yoder, ethnocentrism is not just dangerous but "demonic," and the arms race "fits the apocalyptic language of dragons and angels." He predictably sides with social rebels and makes much of the "countercultural." His dismissive remarks on "orthodoxy" are shallow and all-too-typical of those times.

Yoder was no Chesterton. He was a man of his times, whose social critique a little too comfortably allies him with a self-conscious and self-satisfied cadre of elite protesters who have only grown in numbers, academic prestige, and self-righteousness in the intervening decades. There are exceptions, most notably Yoder's prescient doubts, expressed in an early essay on the civil rights movement, about whether its carefully veiled rhetoric of a "higher law" against racial segregation really invoked God's will or merely constitutional principles. Similarly, his misgivings about the language of "revolution" are thoughtful. Even there, however, we find too little skepticism that the changes aborning were really as deep, novel, or desirable as the self-proclaimed "revolutionaries" liked to think.

One revolution that did occur in those times was in matters sexual. On these issues, where the public has so desperately needed Christian evangelizing, the essays are silent. According to a recent press report, even today Amish families average seven children. One would think a Mennonite such as Yoder (the Amish splintered from the larger Mennonite movement) might have anticipated the culture's turn away from marital procreation and toward recreational sex and free divorce, and might have taken the culture to task for that turn. Yet Yoder was not a visionary of that order. Understanding Jeremiah's injunction as directing us to "seek the salvation of the culture to which God has sent you," he nevertheless tended to restrict his critique to issues—social justice, civil rights, and, especially, the antiwar movement—where he enjoyed the company of the sixties' secular intelligentsia.

ONE SEARCHES largely in vain through these essays for paragraphs criticizing the values and beliefs of the counterculture, let alone anticipating its inevitable break over traditional Christian family morality. The seventies and eighties have made the old counterculture into a new cultural ortho-

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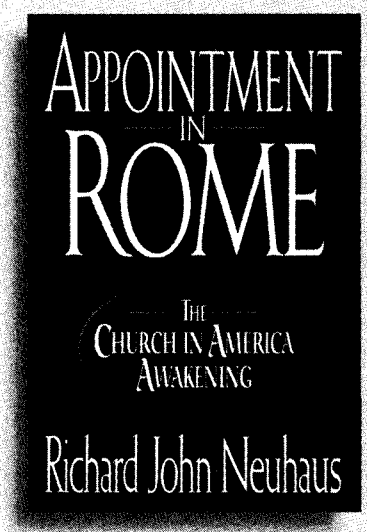

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doxy on sex (and rock 'n' roll, if not yet drugs) and transformed the Christians into a new counterculture on family matters. The Christian now can stand as prophet and witness against the culture, condemning it and evangelizing it with the passion of Jeremiah—a special hero to Yoder—but Yoder seems not to have stepped forward to lead here.

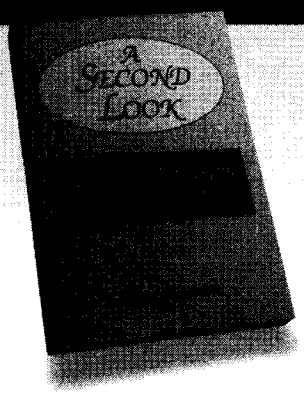
His erudition in matters scriptural, historical, and theological is imposing. Yet, though he shows significant familiarity with the methods and literature of twentieth-century Anglophone moral philosophy, I cannot say the same of the gestures he makes here toward moral theory. His complaint that "utility" is a bad name for what is considered an ultimate good is well taken, but it leaves the utilitarian system untouched. The critique of utilitarianism he does offer is unimpresssive, even omitting the point, clearest after Rawls, that utilitarianism's commitment to equality is as shallow and unreliable as its support for justice. I think he is on to something important for moral theory when he insists that the moral importance of an action lies in "what it signifies" rather than in what it causes. Yet he provides no follow-through on his insight that actions matter as expressions of inner states—no development or defense of this view, no articulation of its implications for moral theory, thinking, and action.

Likewise, there may be merit to his suggestion—taken up most notably by others with Notre Dame connections, including Alasdair MacIntyre, David Burrell, and Hauerwas—that ethics be understood as "narrative." However, anyone presenting that thesis as an alternative to systematic ethics needs to elucidate what narratives can teach (if they don't teach rules and principles), and how narratives can explain why some actions, traits, and people are virtuous while others are vicious. Yoder fails even to address these matters, let alone to justify his positions. He intriguingly calls following Christ a "decision and path" before it is a "goal and principle," but the intended contrast is obscure: isn't the path's destination therein a goal? Doesn't the decision include adoption of principles?

YODER'S CENTRAL IDEA, underdeveloped but striking, is that Christians must avoid what he calls the "Constantinian temptation" to speak to society from its throne, advocating instead the outsider's stance he associates with Jeremiah. He finds in Christian *galut* (dispersion) a calling to witness to a scornful culture and to serve as a model of Christian living. We are outsiders to a godless intellectual culture, an increasingly paganized popular culture, and the secular state; I find inspiring Yoder's reminder that our outsider status is not a reason for despondency but a noble vocation. It is also timely now, when some believers are tempted Constantine-wise by the British theologian Oliver O'Donovan's talk of a "new Christendom."

Efforts to "Christianize the culture," as Pope John Paul II has called for, are all to the good, but only as long as this effort aims simply to inject Christian influences rather than to exclude un-Christian or anti-Christian elements. An exclusively Christian culture must await the day when it naturally arises within a thoroughly Christian population. To think we can first create a pervasively Christian culture as a means to that end is to toy with an oppressive and illicit shortcut. (Nor is this merely a denominational split: O'Donovan is an Anglican and Yoder's anti-Constantinian worries boast no less Catholic an ally than Dante Alighieri.) Yes, it is better for us to be outsiders or prophets than emperors, but are these really the chief options? And hasn't pretension to the role of prophet itself become a

IS THE GOD OF JESUS THE GOD OF JOSHUA?



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form of self-righteousness and self-importance?

The most moving lines and imagery in these essays Yoder borrows from the Jewish writer Stephan Zweig's 1917 poem-drama "Jeremiah." In one passage, the victorious Chaldeans marvel at the spirit of the defeated Jews: "See how they go with their face to the sun/See how they are walking to meet the sun.... They themselves shine with the strength of the sun. Mighty must their God be!" Yoder's anti-Constantinianism calls Christians to emulate the Jews, finding in our cultural and political marginalization, as they found in military defeat, both a call to evangelize and a moral victory. Yoder's soul has completed its walk into God's brilliance. As we trudge on in this cultural and political darkness, his works and days can help keep our feet in the lamplight and serve as a reminder to keep our faces to the sun.

Pet Project

IF A LION COULD TALK: ANIMAL MINDS AND THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS. By STEPHEN BUDIANSKY. *Free Press. 210 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Matthew Scully**

STEPHEN BUDIANSKY'S *If a Lion Could Talk* is a skeptical look at animals and the claims made on their behalf by animal-welfare advocates. In his articles as a science writer for *U.S. News & World Report,* Budiansky has been the mainstream media's chief debunker of such causes as protecting whales and elephants from sport and commercial hunting. Here he lays out the scientific evidence for his view that animals are fascinating, complicated, and mysterious beings, lacking, however, anything comparable to human reason, emotion, or consciousness, let alone moral "rights" of their own.

Budiansky contends that, bereft of language and a sense of self, even the higher creatures act on a kind of "unthinking intelligence," driven by the instinct, impulse, or appetite of the moment. With their yelps, growls, purrs, and other physical expressions they often "mimic" human emotion and intelligence. Hence the tales of dogs, dolphins, or apes rescuing people from danger, elephants grieving for their young, or chimpanzees gazing into sunsets. Such stories, he writes, are the wishful thinking of those who would "knock man off his pedestal at the top of creation." The true project of the animal-rights crowd is not merely to show that animals experience emotions and know things, but that they do so better than "selfish and brutal" mankind.

Most readers will tend to agree with Budiansky's advice that we must view animals "with realism and restraint," taking them on their own terms and steering clear of the anthropomorphic error. He brings a much-needed critical eye into the discussion. On the other hand, he has strayed from the old idea of dominion, with its sense of sovereignty over nature and corresponding duties. Budiansky claims that animals cannot reason as we do, marking a difference not in degree but in kind. But this raises the question: What does our reason require in our role as chief of creatures?

THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN view offers the animals some standing of their own in creation. One need not see them as equals to feel some concern for their welfare or to share a sense of fellowship with the creatures, each in its own way proclaiming God's glory. Budiansky's is a view of dominion without that moral sensibility, a vision of man as unbound evolutionary victor, a tyrant

MATTHEW SCULLY *is a contributing editor to* National Review.

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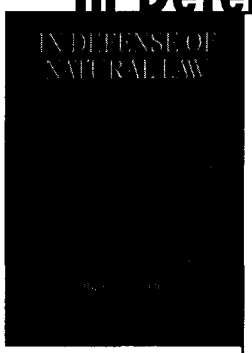

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over nature unchecked by the very restraints of reason and ethics that set us apart from the animals.

Consider his theory of how we ourselves acquired moral consciousness. "Language," writes Budiansky, "is the rocket that has escaped the gravitational pull of biological adaptation . . . into a realm where ethical thought becomes possible." Unlike the animals, "we soar above whatever evolutionary purpose (or accident) drove its creation." Indeed, "To imagine a god is the ultimate attribution of mental states. . . . This is the ultimate expression of Darwin's 'utopian animal,' for, in so doing, man has created the ultimate moral conscience. . . . A literal 'god' is the ultimate container of this concept."

In defense of the beasts of the field, at least it never enters into their furry heads that they created God. Budiansky makes light of the "deep ecology" movement with its spiritual pretensions, but it would be hard to find anything in environmentalist literature more incoherent than this "rocket" theory of human conscience. The whole construct is based—by his own admission—upon an audacious act of anthropomorphism running the other way, ascribing to "God" the designs and caprices of man. The problem, of course, is that however far we might "soar," God and moral truth alike remain subjective states in the mind of man.

In Genesis, God sends the creatures into the world with a "blessing" of their own, reminding man to treat even property animals with mercy. On Budiansky's view, animals are not only bereft of consciousness, but devoid of any individual moral claims on us. The non sequitur running through the book, and indeed the "animal-rights" debate, is that because the creatures cannot themselves grasp or act upon moral concepts, we are not obliged to act morally in our conduct toward them.

To argue for this, Budiansky has turned upon the creatures the same sort of scientific reductionism that probes and analyzes and theorizes human beings to death. He begins with Binti-Jua, the gorilla credited a few years back with saving a three-year-old boy who had fallen into her enclosure at a Chicago zoo. News reports "told how Binti picked up the unconscious boy, cradled him in her arms, and carried him gently to the door of the apes' enclosure." Witnesses described feeling a "chill" as the ape protected the boy from male cagemates. Footage of the drama hit CNN, and in the glorious days afterward Binti was showered with laurels and bananas from across the world. Then comes the "missing detail": zookeepers had hosed the other gorillas away, and Binti had received maternal training that included carrying and retrieving a doll. "Binti was just doing what she had been trained to do," Budiansky writes.

We may safely assume, however, that in Binti's training sessions the doll (presumably a *gorilla* doll) wasn't tossed over the outdoor railing amid shouting, hosing, and pandemonium. One recalls, too, that she did not merely cradle the boy but stroked him, having by then clearly perceived that the object on her lap was neither gorilla nor doll. Establishing cause for the male gorillas' retreat is impossible—it all happened at once. On tape it is clear that as Binti scoops up the boy with the right arm, with the left she unmistakably signals to her cagemates, "Back off!"

BUDIANSKY DOESN'T like primates generally, doubtless because they pose the greatest danger to his conviction that all creatures are but intriguing and affable automatons, objects of scientific or aesthetic appreciation but not of moral duty. When we get to Washo and Nim, the famed chimpanzees who were taught sign language, he belittles

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their childlike requests to trainers for toys or food or play and their crudeness of communication (things like *"You me go out"* and *"Where cat?"*). He never pauses to ask himself why automatons would crave human praise, what they mean by *"you me"* if they have no glimmer of selfhood or sense of other, or why on earth a chimp would have a pet kitten.

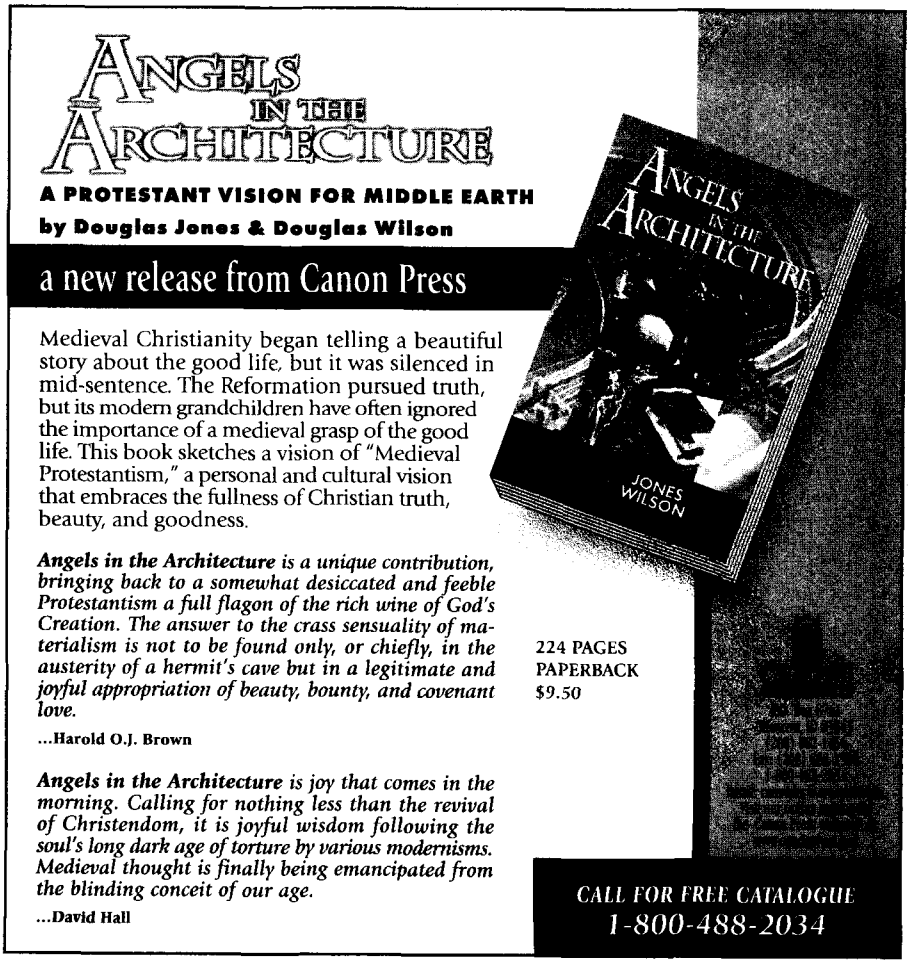
He cites researcher Herbert Terrace as having proved the chimps were "usually" just imitating trainers' signs. What *unusual* signs they made we never learn. The trainers themselves describe Washo, for example, hiding in a tree signing *"quiet quiet"* to herself, and at one point the chimps signing to each other. Nor does Budiansky mention Terrace's own finding that "certain usages of Nim's signs were quite unexpected." "At least two of them (*bite* and *angry*) appeared to function as substitutes for the physical expression of those actions and emotions."

In passing, Budiansky lets it slip that when the chimps didn't get what they wanted, they "would point, now deliberately and with a more expressive gesture, at the object they just named. . . . [They] clearly expected some sort of reward (either food, tickling, or praise) for having named and pointed to an object." Now let's think: A hand-pointing, praise-hungry, bipedal, ticklish attention-hound of reputed simian origin. Who does that bring to mind?

Odd in a book arguing that reason and ethics are what set man apart, which few doubted anyway, nowhere in *If a Lion Could Talk* does Budiansky specify any kind of conduct toward animals that would be ethically impermissible. Doubtless he is very kind to his own animals, the dog and horses he often mentions—though if dogs and horses could talk and read one imagines him waking up one morning to a quiet and deserted ranch. He seems to have got cornered by the relentless logic of his own theory: If there is no such thing as animal suffering, there can be no such thing as cruelty to animals. As God exists only in our minds, so His creatures exist only at our pleasure. Thus, "wonderful" and "mysterious" though animals are, for them "sentience is not sentience, and pain isn't even pain." "Or perhaps, following Daniel Dennett's distinction, we should say that pain is not the same as suffering. . . . Our ability to have thoughts about our experiences turns emotions into something greater and sometimes far worse that mere pain."

The distinction goes back well beyond Dennett, though "mere pain" carries the distinctive whiff of the behaviorist laboratory. C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* makes the similar point that animals experience "a succession of perceptions" but not "a perception of succession" to confer meaning upon suffering. Lewis adds, however: "How far up the scale such unconscious sentience may extend, I will not even guess. It is certainly difficult to suppose that the apes, the elephant, and the higher domestic animals have not, in some degree, a self or soul which connects experience and gives rise to rudimentary individuality."

WE MIGHT ALSO ask how many of our own pains are felt on that grand, Lear-like scale of tragic suffering that Budiansky describes. A kick in the shorts does not send a man into an existential crisis or exquisite agony of soul. It just hurts, and like animals, we scream. When injured or abused, animals shriek, squeal, squawk, bark, growl, whinny, and whimper; some shake, perspire, and lose breath in danger; others get listless and refuse food in abandonment and separation. For all we know, their pain may sometimes seem more immediate, blunt, arbitrary, and inescapable than ours. Walk through an animal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shelter or slaughter house and you wonder if animal suffering might not at times be all the more terrifying and all-encompassing without benefit of the words and concepts that for us, after all, confer not only meaning but consolation. Whatever's going on inside their heads, it doesn't seem "mere" to them.

Budiansky ignores other evidence of mental consciousness in animals, including, for example, the fact that many animals dream. What are they dreaming about if not past scenes and adventures, and what more evidence do you need that the dreamers have memory and mental awareness? Elephant calves and bear cubs who have seen their mothers killed have been observed waking up convulsed by nightmares, a datum Budiansky might want to keep in mind next time he champions the cause of trophy and ivory hunting.

Missing, too, are any explanations of the delight, relish, and contentment many animals seem to take in their own existence and often in our company. We are asked to believe that all these creatures in our midst dumbly plod and swim and fly about, preprogrammed to forage, hunt, and mate, denied even the smallest share in the world's gifts or in its travails—a dreary thought that goes against everything we know about the Programmer himself.

I picture the lion, if he could talk, shaking his great mane in disbelief at the sheer hubris of it, and of all the canned hunts, baiting, high-tech safaris, and endless array of other loutish, exploitative, and cowardly things such theories are used to justify. Maybe he would advise Budiansky to make better use of his own mind and to just leave him to his glorious lionhood.

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Hating Hitler

THE HITLER OF HISTORY. By JOHN LUKACS. *Knopf. 279 pp. $26.*

EXPLAINING HITLER: THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINS OF HIS EVIL. By RON ROSENBAUM. *Random House. 427 pp. $30.*

Reviewed by **Walter Sundberg**

IN SEPTEMBER 1948, Irving Kristol surveyed the current literature on Hitler and the Nazis in the pages of *Commentary*. He called this material, which even in those early years amounted to an impressive pile of memoirs, essays, and journal articles, "autopsies" of the defeated regime.

Despite the bulk of information at his disposal, the young author was left in a quandary as to what it all meant. This was because in his view, "We are still imbued with the rationalist political theory of the eighteenth century which ascribed to each government its 'reason' and 'purpose.'" This model, he noted, does not work with Hitler and his thugs. Theirs was a regime of "freebooters" who took advantage of whatever ideas, circumstances, or political opportunities were available to pursue their quest for personal power. Adolf Hitler was the pirate king; Goering, Goebbels, Himmler, and Bormann his cutthroat courtiers. Neither socialist nor capitalist, Nazi theory "was a grab-bag of everything that sounded useful." Vulgar and crude, motivated by visceral hatred yet capable of discerning the general will, these brutal manipulators brought one of the most profound cultures the world has ever known to a state of abject obedience. The consequence of this obedience was that Germany ignited total warfare among Western nations, killed millions of innocent citizens, and engineered the systematic destruction of European Jewry.

WALTER SUNDBERG *is Professor of Church History at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.*

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One would expect, even hope, that only monsters inspired by the devil could wreak such havoc. Ironically, the Nazis appeared in their personal lives to be small, petty, and, in the way of the petite bourgeoisie, sentimental in their tastes and attachments. Each of the Nazi leaders displayed psychological imbalances to be sure. But these did not divorce them from the human family. At the end we are left, said Kristol, with a mystery: "The Nazis are human: that is what the psychiartists tell us. . . . But the Nazis are also nonhuman: that is what we, their wounded fellow-creatures, have to tell the psychiatrists and ourselves, as we point to the incredible horrors they so calmly worked on the body and soul of mankind."

Since 1948, the bibliography of Hitler and Nazism has grown to epic proportions. The unholy mystery that Kristol named a half century ago has neither changed nor disappeared. How do we assess all of this spilled ink? Has it brought us closer to the mystery or kept us away? The value of these finely written and thoroughly researched books by John Lukacs and Ron Rosenbaum is that they have waded through the spilled ink to provide what are, in effect, intelligent annotated bibliographies. To their credit, both men know that, despite the voluminous research, the mysterious evil that was Hitler eludes our grasp. This fact of research has moral significance: it means that we cannot and dare not put Hitler behind us.

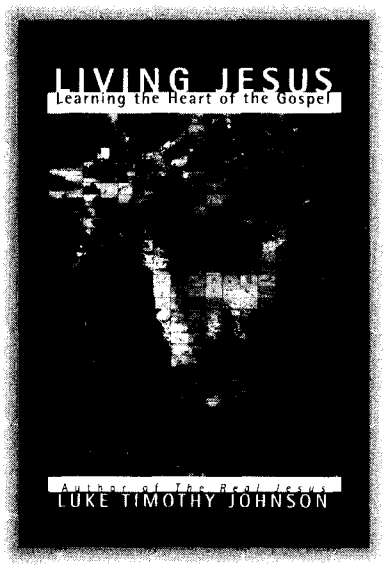
JOHN LUKACS, a native of Hungary, now retired from the peripatetic life of visiting professor, provides in *The Hitler of History* an objective, scholarly account of the subject. To ascertain the historical Hitler requires a cool-eyed assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Hitler as a political leader and a recognition of the cultural and social facts that place the Nazi movement in context.

Hitler was an extraordinarily talented political leader who won the allegiance of the German people by forming a strategic alliance with the conservative middle class and playing on the fears and prejudices of common people. But he was also a revolutionary and visionary (not a reactionary) who sought successfully to regiment the mind and will of the whole society to serve the glory of German nationalism. Hitler's driving purpose was hatred of what he thought were the enemies of Germany, especially the Jews. He was an evil man. But Lukacs, unlike many in the scholarship he surveys, refuses to see Hitler as an irrational fanatic, even in his last days. Personally, Hitler appeared, at least in his public persona, disciplined, hardworking, and plain. Whatever crimes he committed, Hitler had the support of the German *Volk*. This fact, however uncomfortable it might be for contemporary Germans, must never be forgotten.

In this regard, Lukacs has little sympathy for conservative historians, notably Ernst Nolte, who see in Nazism a precursor of the Western defense against Soviet communism. He refuses to relativize the criminal behavior of the Nazi regime by comparing it to Communist atrocities. But Lukacs is willing to acknowledge the conservative argument, made most forcefully by Joachim Fest, that if Hitler had died before the war, he would be remembered, despite his early excesses, as a great German leader.

As to the matter of Hitler's unholy mystery, Lukacs' insights are especially intriguing. Barely a month after Hitler's suicide, Pope Pius XII, speaking before the College of Cardinals, called Hitler a "satanic apparition." Lukacs is suspicious of this "demonization" because he believes it might serve the purpose of turning Hitler into a supernatural evil power or metaphysical construct of negative forces

The Heart of the Gospel



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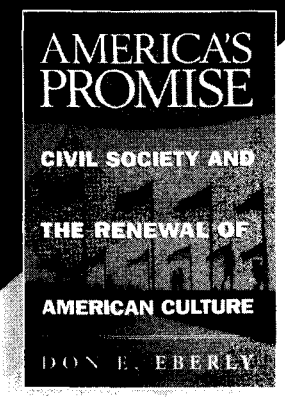

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Don Eberly is an affiliate scholar at the Institute for American Values; he has written or edited three previous books on issues of civil society. He is the director of the Civil Society Project, and founder and Chairman of the National Fatherhood Initiative.

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that lessens the historical responsibility of man. Lukacs quotes approvingly the response made to the Pope by the Austrian Catholic historian Friedrich Heer: "The Pope overlooks entirely that this 'satanic apparition' was a very concrete human incarnation who, before all in the Munich so loved by the Pope but also elsewhere, was promoted and helped into power by very responsible and notable men."

Despite his argument against defining Hitler as an evil emissary from the spirit world, Lukacs cannot resist his own theological speculation. He muses in a footnote that perhaps the New Testament prediction of the Antichrist might be a fitting category: "The Antichrist will not be horrid and devilish, incarnating some kind of frightful monster—hence recognizable immediately. He will not seem to be anti-Christian. He will be smiling, generous, popular, an idol, adored by masses of people because of the sunny prosperity he seems to have brought, a false father (or husband) to his people. Save for a small minority, Christians will believe in him and follow him." Across the centuries, the notion of the Antichrist has been misused and abused by theologians and historians. Lukacs is that rare counterexample who reveals the appropriate usage and explanatory power of this ancient biblical symbol.

RON ROSENBAUM, a journalist and novelist, provides a more personal and existential account of Hitler scholarship. Many prominent intellectuals have attempted to explain the horrible enigma that is Hitler. Rosenbaum seeks to explain these explainers. He investigates not only Hitler, but the meanings we give to Hitler. Modeling his work on Albert Schweitzer's *Quest for the Historical Jesus* (1906), which demonstrated that modern biographies of Jesus teach more about modernity than they do about the Jesus of history, Rosenbaum explores what scholarship on Hitler reveals about us.

Looking Hitler in the face confirms us in the fact that we live in a therapeutic age that has devised a host of flexible canons to gauge our misdeeds. It is not surprising that these canons have been applied to Hitler. Analysts have blamed his father or his mother, or both, for his psychosis. Others, relying on the dubious report of a Russian autopsy of Hitler's charred remains, have claimed that malformed genitals are a key to the man. Scholars are reasonably sure that Hilter engaged in sexual relations with at least seven women. We know that six of these women committed suicide or at least tried to; perhaps this intriguing fact is the center of the mystery. Rosenbaum explores this psychological labyrinth with the typical gusto of a contemporary journalist; lest one have any doubt as to his interest in these matters, a picture of Hitler as a baby adorns the dust jacket. But in the end, Rosenbaum is not satisfied with psychosexual explanations. Given the immensity of the moral questions Hitler raises as a public, historical figure, his meaning and responsibility cannot be reduced to the subjective vagaries of individual psychosis.

We also live in an historicist age that subsumes individual actions of historical agents within impersonal social and cultural forces. This too has been a hallmark of opinions on Hitler. Rosenbaum mentions in passing the example of Bill Clinton. At the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington in 1993, Clinton observed that the German "culture which produced Goethe, Schiller, and Beethoven, then brought forth Hitler and Himmler." In Rosenbaum's view, this gets Hitler off the hook by making him "the pawn of larger, purportedly 'deeper,' and more profound forces of history and society that made the Holocaust 'inevitable.'" Paradoxically, this makes Hitler less than he is by reducing his personal responsibility and more than he is by elevating him to the level of being a conduit of a nation's destiny.

In the end, Rosenbaum can hardly bear to tolerate this type of ap-

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proach. He sees it at work in Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996) in which the controlling "historical force" is Western anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism supposedly produced Hitler as a catalyst to carry out its will and seduced average Germans by making them victims of its "ideological poisoning." Rosenbaum believes that this theory makes it too easy for Germans to discount personal responsibility.

IN ROSENBAUM'S VIEW, the most egregious example of this kind of historicist argument is George Steiner. In his novel *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* (1981), Steiner provides Hitler with a Hegelian-Freudian apology for his actions. Since it was the Jews who brought mature morality into the world—that is, the modern conscience or superego as we know it—it is not surprising that man, now feeling guilty for his desires and instincts, reacts in resentment. In the novel, Hitler claims that he is the agent of this resentment. But he does not stop there. Hitler also claims that because he failed, Israel was born. Hence, in the cunning of history, Hitler is a savior of the Jews; without him, they would not have returned to the Promised Land. Rosenbaum wants nothing to do with this historical, quasi-theological rationalization, even if it is offered in the flexible form of novelistic imagination. He judges Steiner harshly as someone engaging in an impious exercise of intellectual fancy, an irresponsible playing around with ideas.

Rosenbaum ends his book with an appreciative account of Lucy S. Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews* (1975). Dawidowicz argues that Hitler formed his hatred of the Jews as early as 1918 and spent his life living it out. Hitler's evil policies were intentional. Whatever else went on in the complexities of interwar Germany, one fact is sure: Hitler is guilty of premeditated, first-degree murder. This fact does not ultimately explain Hitler as an historical force. It is not an answer to the millions who died and suffered. It does not account for the unholy mystery that is the power of evil in the world, a power that can take unexpected forms in human history and find a home even in the hearts of the good. But it does call forth an existential response. If one hates evil, one must hate Hitler.

Rosenbaum ends the book with a story about the great political philosopher Leo Strauss as told to him by Milton Himmelfarb. A friend of Strauss had been invited after the war to visit Martin Heidegger, German philosopher and unrepentant Nazi collaborator. Strauss said to his friend, *"Don't go!"* He had no more to say than that. He recoiled from anything that had to do with the Nazis. Strauss was a great philosopher, who understood the political world and the world of ideas. But he was also a Jew who knew who his enemy was. Rosenbaum interprets the anecdote this way: "[I]t is, in fact, the culmination of a *truer* sophistication to be able to hate Hitler, a sophistication that doesn't fall prey to the pseudosophisticated snares of explanation as exculpation, of explanation as abstraction away from Hitler's personal agency. Hatred as not that which one *starts* with, rather as something one ends up with; the product of a *deeper* understanding."

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE FUTURE OF ISLAM AND THE WEST: CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS OR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE? By SHIREEN T. HUNTER. *Center for Strategic and International Studies. 197 pp. $55 cloth, $17.95 paper.*

The subject of Islam's relations to the rest of the world, in particular to the West, continues to fascinate as well as divide experts in the field. It was Samuel Huntington who first threw down the gauntlet with his "clash of civilizations" theory,

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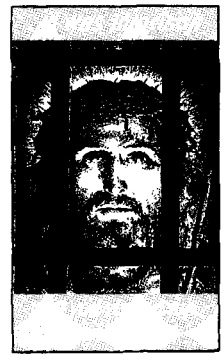

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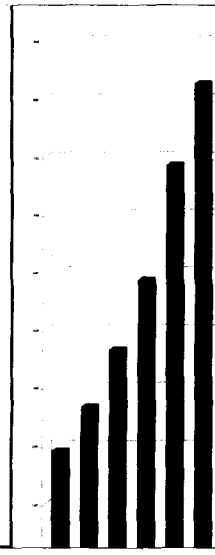

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and the battle has since been fiercely taken up by a variety of commentators, critics, and dilettantes. Shireen T. Hunter provides the most recent reaction to the Huntington thesis. Representing the voice of Islamic moderation, Hunter seems driven by the desire to absolve Islam—both as a creed and as a way of life—from any responsibility for the tensions and animosities that characterize its relations with the West. Her discussion is rife with inaccuracies and misleading abstractions resulting from her narrowly apologetic stance. For example, Hunter's insistence that Islam's classical fusion of religion and politics is only "alleged" reflects neither the truth about Islam as an ideology nor Islamic practice throughout history. Similarly, the idea echoed by Hunter that *jihad* can be interpreted as waging an internal battle against "one's own baser instincts and impulses" has no basis whatsoever in mainstream Islamic jurisprudence. She hedges on the question of whether Islam is compatible with democracy. Most disturbing of all is her reply to Huntington's observation that no other worldview besides Islam is so thoroughly surrounded by violence. Is this violence entirely the fault of the non-Islamic cultures (specifically the West) who are out to conspire against Islam, as Hunter would suggest? Naturally, many factors beyond Islam contribute to its incompatibility with other cultures, but one cannot ignore, as Hunter cavalierly does, some very real ingredients that are uniquely Islamic. But like many of her fellow apologists, Hunter is through and through a positivist. She believes that everything, including Islam, evolves and that the future holds greater homogeneity than differentiation. The problem that she and other positivists must contend with, however, is the incredibly slow pace of this presumed evolution. When U.S. embassies around the world remain targets of terrorism and when Islamic groups and states alike seek to acquire nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons capabilities, a treatment as flawed and unconvincing as Hunter's compels one to wonder at the sort of policy analysis and advice being produced by Washington's leading think tanks.

— *Habib C. Malik*

A HUMANE ECONOMY: THE SOCIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FREE MARKET. By WILHELM RÖPKE. *Intercollegiate Studies Institute. 350 pp. $24.95.*

Here we find a highly readable explication of the free market economy—and the moral and cultural limits within which it must operate—from the thinker who is most credited with guiding Germany's postwar economic "miracle." Although often overlooked in America, Röpke is considered in Europe to be the equal of von Mises and Hayek, having worked closely with each for decades. A refugee from Hitler's Reich, Röpke fled to Switzerland, where he became the theoretician of small government, small business, and localism. He was descended from a family of Lutheran pastors, but he took his moral compass from Chesterton, Belloc, and Pope Pius XI. Agreeing with them that widespread entrepreneurship, small farming, and decentralized power were essential for the market economy to survive, he tried to offer measures to promote these goods without invoking state coercion (anticipating in many ways Pope John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*). Firmly ensconced within the classical liberal tradition, Röpke also assimilated the insights of Burke, Tocqueville, and Russell Kirk about the need for institutions, tradition, and strong families to offset excessive individualism even as he championed the rights of man against threats from left and right. In this late work, back in print after a long hiatus, he examines the moral and civilizational implications of the welfare state, inflation, urbanization, suburban sprawl, population growth, and environmental degradation. He also offers a spirited defense of middle-class, "bourgeois" virtue as the backbone of a

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good society. This book is an excellent starting point for the non-economist reader who wishes to cut through jargon and formulas to understand the moral underpinnings of the free market and what must be done to preserve it.

— *John Zmirak*

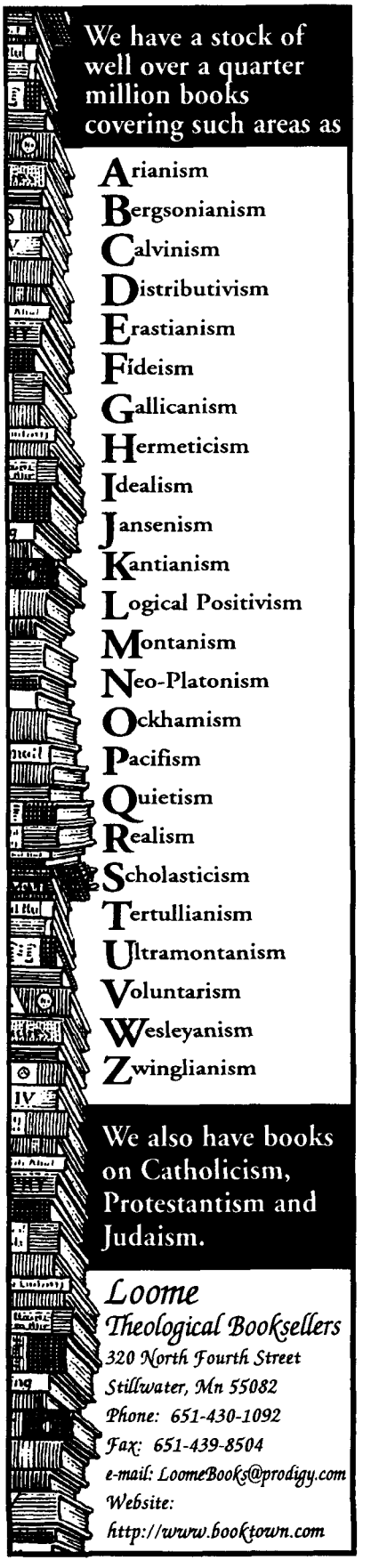
THE TASTE FOR THE OTHER: THE SOCIAL AND ETHICAL THOUGHT OF C. S. LEWIS. Second Edition. By GILBERT MEILAENDER. *Eerdmans. 244 pp. $16.*

As evidenced by the 1998 re-issuing of Gilbert Meilaender's classic, interest in Lewisiana shows little sign of abating. In the twenty years separating the first and second editions, much has been published on Lewis' life and thought. Relatively little, however, has provided what Meilaender believes to be a coherent, critical account of the theological vision that imbues Lewis' writings. Scholarship in the main has not accounted for the unity of Lewis' theological vision nor the theological assumptions undergirding that vision. *Taste* is dedicated to probing Lewis' understanding of "what it would mean fully to realize our nature as human beings"—an understanding that is "an intensely moral one, deeply Augustinian in its basic contours, in which ethics and theology are closely intertwined." Meilaender recounts several themes recurring throughout Lewis' writings. Lewis warns that the lure of created things—"the sweet poison of the false infinite"—must be resisted so that life's purpose not be distorted. Similarly, he understands all human beings as created for fellowship with God and with humanity. Divine communion and human community both are dependent upon—and issue out of—a self-sacrificing love in which pride must surrender and human longings be redirected. Grief and pain are no stranger to self-giving love; rather, Lewis sees them as good (though not unqualifiedly so). Because we humans are made for communion with God, in order to bring us to our journey's end God must at times appear to be "the Divine Surgeon"; only then can we be truly human. Living with God is a call to constant risk-taking, to the possibility of being wounded, to negation and renunciation. While Lewis concedes that not all must suffer tragedy, each must experience "the tether and pang of the particular." We must lay ourselves bare, vulnerable to both God and others, or else lose our humanity. A final—and pervasive—theme Meilaender finds throughout Lewis' writings is the existence of "primeval moral platitudes" which we always know—and break. All told, Lewis is at his Augustinian best as he portrays throughout his works what it means to be thoroughly human. Meilaender thinks this marvelous web of deep-rooted, interlocking theological convictions explains Lewis' timeless appeal to readers.

— *J. Daryl Charles*

WHAT OUR MOTHERS DIDN'T TELL US: WHY HAPPINESS ELUDES THE MODERN WOMAN. By DANIELLE CRITTENDEN. *Simon & Schuster. 193 pp. $23.*

Crittenden warmly, anecdotally, and authoritatively recaptures for us a truth that was once too obvious to be said—women are, in fact, women. Thirty years of aggressive feminism have left the current generation of women in some doubt about this basic biological fact; they have been encouraged to be more like men and less like women. This splendid book engages the regnant feminist wisdom issue by issue, starting with sex and moving through love, marriage, motherhood, aging, and finally the dangerous equation of the personal with the political. Crittenden encourages women to be women again and to take back the lost pleasures of womanhood. At the end, she offers concrete advice revolutionary enough to make the current revolutionaries tremble in their boots—marry younger, have babies younger, and stay with those babies. Most importantly, she re-



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minds us what life is really about: loving interdependence.

THE LORD WILL GATHER ME IN: MY JOURNEY TO JEWISH ORTHODOXY. By DAVID KLINGHOFFER. *Free Press. 262 pp. $24.*

Many readers will remember the author's reflection on "Anti-Semitism Without Anti-Semites" (FT, April 1998) and the spirited response to it in a subsequent issue. Klinghoffer's spiritual autobiography turns around a most singular biography: born of a Swedish woman, adopted by secular Jews, falling in love with and coming near to marrying a devout Catholic, converting to Judaism under Conservative auspices, and then "reconverting" to Orthodoxy. It is a story of spiritual earnestness told with literary panache. For all the singularity of Klinghoffer's circumstances, the story provides insight into the larger *ba'al teshuvah* movement, in which thousands of younger Jews are finding their way to Orthodoxy. There is an explicit polemic against Conservative, never mind Reform, Judaism for believing only that Torah contains the truth, whereas Orthodoxy affirms that it *is* the truth. And, after searching in vain for some touch of Jewish ancestry, Klinghoffer makes the liberating discovery that being Jewish is not so much about blood and tribe as about knowing and living the truth of Torah. (Other Jews of course will give a different account of the balance between tribe and Torah in their religion.) Both Jewish and non-Jewish readers will undoubtedly learn much about the ways of the spiritual life and about contemporary Judaism from this compelling story.

THE POLITICS OF BAD FAITH. By DAVID HOROWITZ. *Free Press. 256 pp. $25.*

The author of *Radical Son* launches a blistering attack on the "bad faith" of leftists who disguise their radical, and usually Marxist, ideology behind labels such as "liberal," "moderate," or "social democrat." Horowitz, a "red diaper baby" brought up in a stifling New York world of Jews who had traded their faith for the Communist delusion, is a veteran of the sometimes violent permutations of the New Left of the 1960s who discovered liberation in the thought of Friedrich Hayek and others who are now labeled "conservative." Readers who did not live through the intensity of the ideological conflicts of the left may find Horowitz's rhetoric frequently overheated, but, as in his earlier book, he opens a window to worlds of radicalism that must be appreciated in order to understand today's political culture. Horowitz writes: "Conservatism is not the other side of the coin of radicalism any more than skepticism is the mirror of faith. I have not exchanged one ideology for another; I have freed myself from the chains of an Idea." The book is especially convincing in its argument that that Idea, based in Marxist notions of class conflict, is the de facto religion of the left. At the same time, Horowitz's conservatism is notably tone deaf to the role of authentic religion, and, with the exception of a strong chapter on homosexuality and the AIDS epidemic, there is nary a mention of abortion and other moral and social questions that drive contemporary conservatism. Such omissions and the tone of anger notwithstanding, the book is an important tract for our political times.

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CHURCH AND REVOLUTION: CATHOLICS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. By THOMAS BROKENKOTTER. *Doubleday/Image. 424 pp. $15 paper.*

Pitching to a popular audience, the author, who teaches history at Xavier University in Cincinnati, offers a once-over-lightly account of how the Catholic Church moved from being a force of reaction at the time of the French Revolution to today's champion of peace and justice (progressively construed). He tells the story through the prism of key individuals, from Ireland's Daniel O'Connell through Karl Marx and El Salvador's Oscar Romero. There are some unconventional figures, such as Henry Edward Manning and Konrad Adenauer, but they are refracted through the conventional liberal

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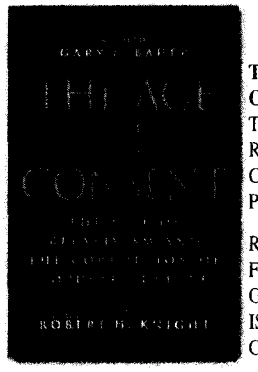

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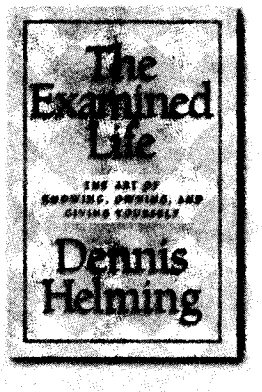

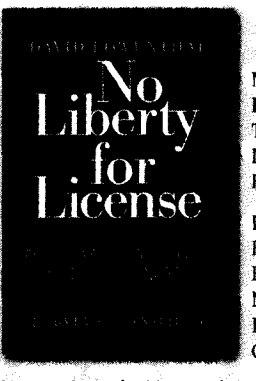

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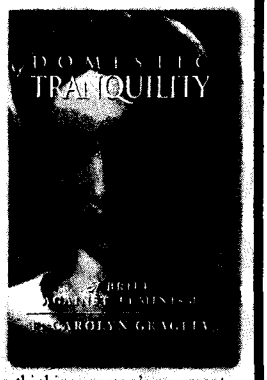

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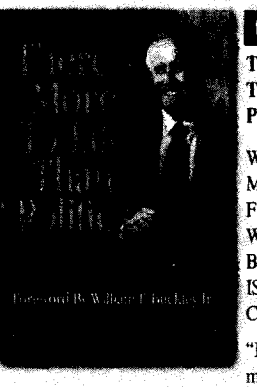

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lens of class conflict. The generally sympathetic treatment of Marx concludes with the acknowledgment that things did not turn out the way he said they would. John Paul II is almost totally absent from the story, even in the chapter on Poland, which the author calls "Lech Walesa's Revolution." It is one way of writing history.

BEYOND THE DARKNESS: A BIOGRAPHY OF BEDE GRIFFITHS. By SHIRLEY DU BOULAY. *Doubleday. 308 pp. $24.95.*

Bede Griffiths (1906-1993) was an English convert to Christianity who became a Benedictine monk and established an ashram in India where he devoted himself to the interaction among world religions. Rome had difficulty with his theological views, which sometimes suggested an undiscriminating syncretism, and some of his epigones took his inspiration far beyond anything approximating Christian orthodoxy. The life and work of Bede deserve better, for instance, than book blurbs by Hans Küng and creationist guru Matthew Fox. Unfortunately, his biographer's grasp of theological and spiritual realities does not rise above the blurbs.

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HANS KÜNG: BREAKING THROUGH. By HERMANN HÄRING. *Continuum. 400 pp. $29.95.*

An embarrassingly fulsome appreciation of Küng's "work and legacy" offered by a Dutch disciple on the master's seventieth birthday. The book does provide an interesting insight into the industry of collaborators and ghostwriters that might be called Küng, Inc. Even as a birthday present, however, the book could have done with just a touch of critical distance.

JOHN PAUL II AND MORAL THEOLOGY. Edited by CHARLES E. CURRAN and RICHARD A. MCCORMICK. *Paulist. 304 pp. $29.95 paper.*

The tenth volume in "readings in moral theology" edited by two theologians who are very vocally unsympathetic to this pontificate. Most of the twenty-six contributions deal with the encyclicals *Evangelium Vitae, Veritatis Splendor,* and *Centesimus Annus.* Given the disposition of the editors, the selection is reasonably representative of current thinking in Catholic moral theology.

RELUCTANT DISSENTER. By JAMES PATRICK SHANNON. *Crossroad. 228 pp. $19.95.*

James Shannon was once celebrated as a leading light of the Catholic hierarchy in America. In 1969 he resigned as a bishop and a priest, ostensibly over his disagreement with the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae.* As this short and readable autobiography makes clear, perhaps inadvertently, his problems with the encyclical brought to the surface his long-standing difficulties with the hierarchical order of the Church and its requirement of obedience. Lionized by the liberal media but knowing he would never get a diocese of his own, he embraced a new life in marriage, the academy, and the law. It is a sad story told without deep personal or intellectual insight, but also without bitterness. As Shannon would likely agree, he was simply not cut out to be a priest or a bishop, at least not in the Catholic Church that is.

ASSISTED SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA, PAST AND PRESENT. Edited by J. C. WILLKE. *Hayes (Cincinnati, OH). 149 pp. $7.95 paper.*

A valuable overview of current debates and court decisions, with responsible reference to historical precedents, including that of Nazi Germany. A useful text for discussion groups.

RECONSTRUCTING AMERICA. By JAMES W. CEASER. *Yale University Press. 291 pp. $30.*

A spirited and elegant argument that very much needs to be made. Ceaser, who is professor of government at the University of Virginia, traces the way in which, from the eighteenth century on, American intellectuals have imitated their presumed betters in Europe in heaping disdain upon the presumed vulgarity of all things American. Combining refined polemic with cogent reasoning, the author urges that Europhiliac cultural and literary criticism be countered with clearheaded political science in "reconstructing" the truth about the astonishing achievement that is the American political order. Warmly recommended.

THE EXPERIENCE OF NOTHINGNESS. By MICHAEL NOVAK. *Transaction. 145 pp. $21.95 paper.*

A revised and expanded edition of a book published thirty years ago by an author very familiar to the readers of this journal. The extended in-

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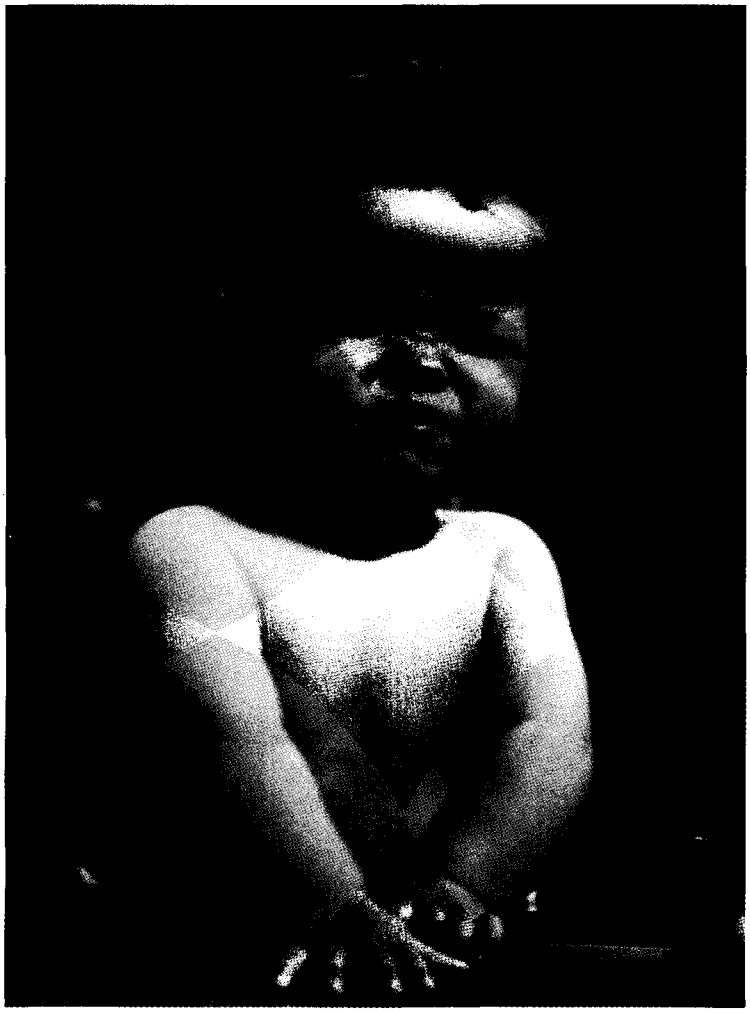

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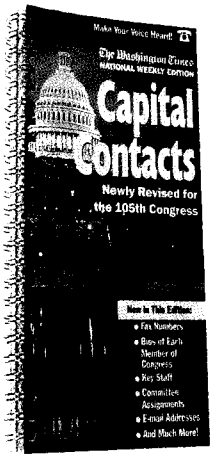

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troduction is a particularly useful intellectual autobiography of Novak's movement over the years to a more vibrant orthodoxy.

THE SIXTIES. By ARTHUR MARWICK. *Oxford University Press. 963 pp. $39.95.*

An idiosyncratic mishmash of footnotes to the cultural revolution in its British, French, Italian, and American expressions. While Marwick has offended some on the left by his coolness to Marxism, he is uncompromising in his opposition to "the radical, divisive, philistine conservatism of Reagan and Thatcher," and is confident that such reactionary forces will not undo the long-term liberating blessings of the sixties. A huge book that can be read as confirmation of the revolution's long and successful march through the institutions.

THE SIZE OF CHESTERTON'S CATHOLICISM. By DAVID W. FAGERBERG. *University of Notre Dame Press. 214 pp. $25 paper.*

Among the countless books on the great GKC, this gracefully written essay deserves a place of distinction. The author is a Lutheran who found his way to Catholicism, through Chesterton in large part, and the book is an expanded reflection on the latter's idea that the Catholic Church is "the trysting-place for all the truths in the world." The claim is that Catholicism can accommodate all the other truths, including Christian truths, but none of them can accommodate Catholicism, which is larger than the world itself. Fagerberg demonstrates a mastery of Chesterton's vast literary corpus, and, without blunting the edges, effectively translates Chesterton's polemical joshings for the more ecumenical sensibilities of our day. It is a notable achievement that deserves a wide readership.

THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN POLITICS. By WILLIAM MURCHISON. *Spence. 279 pp. $22.95.*

Popular columnist Murchison brings together many of his best pieces around the theme that the really important things in life (family, love, friendship, death, eternal hope) sharply relativize the imperiousness of politics in the contemporary, especially the liberal, mind. Foreword by William F. Buckley, Jr.

THE INTERNATIONAL BIBLE COMMENTARY. Edited by WILLIAM REUBEN FARMER and DAVID L. DUNGAN. *Liturgical Press. 1,968 pp. $99.95.*

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huge book seems rather odd. Much is made of its being international, with editions in half a dozen languages and contributors from all over the world. Had it all been produced in the U.S., France, or Zimbabwe, it would have been just as good. And it is very good indeed. A seven-year project sponsored by the University of Dallas and led by editor Farmer has produced what is likely the most useful one-volume Bible commentary available. It is described as "a Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary," and that captures the way it is centered in the Catholic tradition but reaches out in all directions. In addition to the commentary on all the books of the Bible (including the deuterocanonical or, as Protestants prefer, apocryphal books), there are more than three hundred pages of introductory materials on the history of biblical texts, patristic exegesis, historical-critical methodologies, and the use of the Bible in preaching. Of course, with so many different scholars involved, not all the articles and commentaries are of equal quality, but this is altogether a breathtakingly ambitious project brought to completion with great distinction. It is also—and this cannot be taken for granted these days—an instance of very handsome bookmaking.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

The House of Human Dignity

Almost everything short of the Kingdom of God can be improved, but some things are so very good that it seems churlish to wish they were better. Such a thing is the statement adopted by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), "Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics." The bishops anticipate that they will once again be accused of imposing their convictions on others, and the usual suspects will engage in dark editorial murmurings about the bishops violating the separation of church and state. The statement cites the Second Vatican Council: "The political community and the Church are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields. Nevertheless, both are devoted to the personal vocation of man, though under different titles. . . . [Yet] at all times and in all places, the Church should have the true freedom to teach the faith, to proclaim its teaching about society, to carry out its task among men without hindrance, and to pass moral judgment even in matters relating to politics whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 76).

"Living the Gospel of Life" is about both the fundamental rights of man and the salvation of souls, notably the salvation of the souls of those who violate or support the violation of the most fundamental right to life. In recent years the bishops have frequently been criticized, with some justice, for issuing statements on political, economic, and military matters that exceed their competence (competence here meaning both understanding and authority). In the present instance, they are solidly grounded in what is indisputably Catholic doctrine and their equally indisputable pastoral obligation for the care of souls.

Of course the statement says nothing new about great evils such as abortion and euthanasia, but it speaks the truth with bracing forthrightness. It is noted that respect for human dignity involves a wide spectrum of issues, and good people can disagree about which problems need to be addressed and how. "But for citizens and elected officials alike, the basic principle is simple: *We must begin with a commitment never to intentionally kill, or collude in the killing, of any innocent human life, no matter how broken, unformed, disabled, or desperate that life may seem.* In other words, the choice of certain ways of acting is always and radically incompatible with the love of God and the dignity of the human person created in His image."

The most significant aspect of the statement is that, for the first time, it confronts firmly and unequivocally a problem that has bedeviled Catholic witness on the life questions for the last decade and more. That problem is the abuse of the metaphor of "the seamless garment" and of the principle expressed in a "consistent ethic of life." The abuse was to relativize the enormity of taking innocent human life by making it but one item on a long list of concerns in the service of human dignity. Numerous Catholic politicians attempted to excuse their pro-abortion stance by pointing out that they were "right" on other issues supported by the Church. In this ploy they were frequently aided by key staff members of the NCCB, by moral theologians of doubtful fidelity to the Church's teaching, and, sad to say, by not a few bishops—all of whom timorously fretted about the Church being outside the "mainstream" and publicly associated with "one-issue politics."

"Living the Gospel of Life" readily allows that there are many issues—e.g., racism, poverty, employment, education, housing, health care—pertinent to protecting human dignity. *"But being 'right' in such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life. . . .* If we understand the human person as the 'temple of the Holy Spirit'—the living house of God—then these [other] issues fall logically into place as the crossbeams and walls of that house. *All direct attacks on innocent human life, such as abortion and*

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euthanasia, strike at the house's foundation." Crucial here is what might be called a metaphor shift, from "seamless garment" and an abstract "consistent ethic" to the house of human dignity whose foundation is the right to life. Neglecting the right to life, the statement contends, is equivalent to building that house on sand.

We are all responsible, the bishops say, for maintaining the house of human dignity, and those who hold public office bear a most particular responsibility. The passage most picked up in news reports is this: "We urge those Catholic officials who choose to depart from Church teaching on the inviolability of human life in their public life to consider the consequences for their own spiritual well being, as well as the scandal they risk by leading others into serious sin. . . . No public official, especially one claiming to be a faithful and serious Catholic, can responsibly advocate for or actively support direct attacks on innocent human life." An earlier draft spoke about such public officials imperiling their soul's salvation, but the substantive truth still comes through clearly enough. One might have wished for an additional passage in which bishops reminded themselves that they, too, can cause grave scandal, however inadvertently, when they are not seen to be challenging pro-abortion politicians who are in their pastoral care. There are other things one might wish, but I quickly step back from sounding churlish lest it detract from the great gift that is "Living the Gospel of Life."

In the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio,* John Paul II writes, "The Church imposes nothing; she only proposes." That is precisely what the bishops are doing. They are proposing the truth about human dignity as taught by the Church, affirmed in the American founding, presupposed by the cause of human rights, and supported by clear reason. What people do with that proposal is their own responsibility. But it is now made certain beyond dispute that Catholics who reject that proposal cannot claim to be faithful Catholics. The bishops have committed themselves to work with such persons in a spirit of heightened pastoral urgency. It is perhaps just as well that the statement does not mention excommunication or other sanctions. If it did, there would be a terrible media row about the bishops "threatening" Catholics in positions of public influence.

Not generally understood is the fact that excommunication is always a matter of self-excommunication. A sentence of excommunication is only a formal acknowledgment of what people have done to themselves. And even then the goal of such a measure is not to punish but to lead to repentance and reconciliation. "Living the Gospel of Life" leaves no doubt that those who knowingly, willingly, and persistently violate the foundational truth of the right to life are, in that respect, placing themselves outside communion with the Catholic Church. It is more than possible that at some point some bishops will, reluctantly and sadly, have to formally declare what it is that some Catholics have done to themselves. But nobody should hope for that to happen. The purpose of this admirable statement is not excommunication but conversion to the Gospel of Life, which is, quite simply, the Gospel.

FT

YEAH, BUT WHAT WAS IN IT FOR MOTHER TERESA?

A couple of years ago physicist Alan Sokal published an article in *Social Text* arguing in the most abstruse postmodernistic jargon that gravity, among other things, is a social construct. It was a hoax, of course, and when Sokol publicly revealed the fact it caused quite a sensation, heaping embarrassment upon the editors and their academic colleagues who had long since lost the capacity to discern the difference between rational discourse and their trendy gibberish. The academy was not amused.

One might expect at first that Susan Kwilecki of the religious studies department and Loretta S. Wilson of economics at Radford University, Virginia, are up to a Sokal-like prank. Their article in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* the lead article no less, is titled "Was Mother Teresa Maximizing Her Utility? An Idiographic Application of Rational Choice Theory." There is, alas, not the slightest hint that the authors are anything less than serious, and solemnly so.

It is a long and tedious article, and I will not bore you with the details. It builds on the work of Laurence Iannaccone, who has been pushing the "rational choice" theory of religion for some time, also in the pages of *JSSR.* The idea is to "approach God as a commodity" and to understand that religious believers are "consumers" rationally calculating their "investment" in a "product" such as salvation supplied by "entrepreneurs" who establish religious "firms." The theory is another in a long history of efforts to turn the study of religion into a "science," as that reductionist god is defined by modernity. Since there is no Nobel Prize in religion, some in religious studies, it seems, are trying to compete in the field of economics.

A rational choice reading of Mother Teresa helps us understand that her vaunted love for the poor had another purpose: "Aiding the poor purchased direct contact with Christ. . . . Closeness to God, not the

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alleviation of human pain in itself, was the preferred religious product." "Thus from a rational choice perspective, essential facets of Mother Teresa's world-famous mission to the poor reflected her preference for an expensive religious commodity—close proximity to God, or holiness." For Mother Teresa, worship, the sacramental life, and the pursuit of holiness took priority even over helping people in need. "The rational choice reading of holiness as Mother Teresa's ranking preference explains this otherwise puzzling lapse of compassion for the sick as calculated utility maximization."

Considering Mother Teresa "as the owner of a successful religious firm," it becomes obvious that the Missionaries of Charity order "produces a product mix of charity linked with spiritual awareness and Christian salvation." The "product mix" helps explain her "entrepreneurial success." "On the one hand, fostering nearness to God, Mother Teresa sold traditional Catholic products—the sacraments, the condemnation of abortion, and reverence for Church authority. On the other hand, with charity as her chief commodity, the firm simultaneously marketed a sideline of nonsectarian humanitarian values—the obligation to help others, a recognition of the sacredness of all life—that appealed to liberal, non-Catholic consumers."

While Mother Teresa's "professions of self-abnegating surrender to God are difficult to comprehend within the rational choice framework," a more careful examination leads to the conclusion that she "is a calculating, profit-seeking religious entrepreneur." Her claims to rely entirely upon God and to refuse financial support that might compromise her vision, "although irrational from a materialistic standpoint, from the point of view of the charismatic, who answers directly to God—the ultimate head of the firm—" reflect "means-to-end thinking." The authors allow that rational choice theory is unlikely to explain a phenomenon such as Mother Teresa in "all its fullness," but they conclude that, "While not sufficient by itself and certainly not the only interpretation the data will bear, rational choice theory provides a valuable addition to the arsenal of analytic approaches to religion."

Perhaps the arsenal will be put to work in a forthcoming article in *JSSR*, "Was Jesus' Investment in the Cross Maximizing His Utility?" Actually, one does not have to imagine that, for these are precisely the kinds of questions discussed at length by rational choice religion scholars such as Iannaccone, Lawrence Young, Mark Chaves, and others. When I was a pastor in a black parish in Brooklyn many years ago, twelve-year-old Michael asked in catechism class, "If Jesus was doing what he really wanted to do, why was it a sacrifice?" It was a good question, asked in honest wonder and opening the door to reflections of great spiritual and intellectual interest. As applied to religion, rational choice theory is not even one small intellectual step beyond young Michael's perceptive question. And, of course, in presuming to scientifically "explain" the phenomenon of holiness, it closes doors. Far from being sophisticated, it is every bit as vulgar as those Christian business boosters who promote Jesus as "history's greatest salesman." Or the psychobabble counterpart to rational choice that claims to explain religion in terms of dependency, wish projection, and other tools in the analytical arsenal of the intellectually and spiritually stunted project that is academic religious studies.

FT

STIRRING A STORM

"Her canonization has created a storm of controversy in the Jewish community, affecting the Catholic-Jewish dialogue." That at least is the claim of Abraham Foxman, national director, and Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of interfaith affairs, of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Certainly they are doing their best to stir a storm of controversy, although—to judge by the general media and the Jewish press—with limited success. Their press release attacking the canonization of Edith Stein (Sister Theresa Benedicta of the Cross) was issued almost simultaneously with the twentieth anniversary of this pontificate and the publication of ADL's full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* praising John Paul II's contributions to Jewish-Christian relations. But ADL cannot have it both ways.

The ADL press release complains about "certain Church figures" who are responsible for the "Christianization of the Holocaust," citing the canonization of Edith Stein and, earlier, of the heroic Father Maximilian Kolbe who, in a drive-by smear, the ADL implies was an anti-Semite. The canonization of Edith Stein is, we are told, "a Jewish text for a Christian pretext, an excuse whereby the Church can claim the same victimization which its own anti-Jewish practices foisted on innocent Jewish lives." The suggestion that her canonization will help interfaith dialogue is, says the ADL, "pure fantasy." The "certain Church figures" who have done and suggested what ADL deplores are Edith Stein and John Paul II. Rabbi Klenicki has elsewhere said that it was the duty of Edith Stein "to remain a good Jew and use her influence to urge other Jews to observe their faith." It is understandable that he holds that view, but it is a complaint he should take up with Edith Stein, which, one may be permitted to suggest, is not best

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done through a press release attacking the Catholic Church that she embraced. And, if ADL is interested in Jewish-Christian dialogue, it is not helpful to claim that the Holocaust was "the expression of a total pagan anti-Semitism nurtured by two thousand years of Christian teaching of contempt."

Rabbi Klenicki has over the years made important contributions to Christian-Jewish understanding. Ten years ago I was pleased to write a book with him, *Believing Today: Jew and Christian in Conversation* (Eerdmans). It is most regrettable that he allows himself to become party to a polemic against Edith Stein, Maximilian Kolbe, John Paul II, and the Catholic Church. And it is most unseemly that ADL treats the Holocaust as a dispute over a piece of merchandise. ADL declares that the Holocaust is an "essentially Jewish event"—as though millions of Christians were not also killed, as though Hitler were not also set upon the destruction of Christianity, in large part because of its Jewish origins. Rabbi David Novak, head of Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto, says of the ADL statement: "What it says in effect is that the Catholic Church killed Edith Stein and is now trying to cover up its guilt by making her a saint. It is an obscene statement."

At the canonization of Edith Stein, the Pope spoke movingly about Christians and Jews standing in solidarity against the paganism of that time and all times. To which the ADL contemptuously responds that this is no more than the use of "a Jewish text for a Christian pretext" in an attempt to excuse the Church's responsibility for the Holocaust. The ADL notwithstanding, Jews and Christians who are interested in serious dialogue will respect the conscientious decisions made by the heroes and heroines of both communities, and will respect how those communities honor their own. They will refrain from distorting history for partisan or institutional purposes that obscure the mystery of our providential entanglement in different understandings of what it means to be faithful to the God of Israel, who is the Father of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus. And of Abraham Foxman, Leon Klenicki, Edith Stein, Maximilian Kolbe, and John Paul II.

FT

JOHN PAUL THE GREAT

I wrote the following, which was published in the Wall Street Journal, *to mark the twentieth anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II. Perhaps it will be of interest to those who are not readers of that estimable newspaper.*

"Be not afraid!" That was the theme of Karol Wojtyla's first homily after he became Pope John Paul II. The theme has been repeated like a triphammer throughout his pontificate, which began twenty years ago on October 16, 1978. "Be not afraid!" was addressed to his fellow Poles and others behind what was then called the Iron Curtain, and it marked the beginning of the end for what it is no longer "controversial" to call the Evil Empire. Historians of a secular bent will no doubt celebrate this Pope chiefly for his indispensable part in the collapse of communism, and that is surely no little contribution to world history. But it does not capture the deeper reasons why, as with Pope Leo of the fifth century and Pope Gregory of the sixth century, Pope John Paul will, I believe, be known to history as John Paul the Great.

In 1978 and today at the threshold of the third millennium his cry "Be not afraid!" is addressed not only to persecuted believers, and not only to Christians, but to the entire human community. The message is one of radical humanism. In the future, as in the past, the human project will be threatened, assailed, and brutally battered, but the human project cannot fail. Not finally. The human project cannot fail because, in the person of Jesus Christ, God has invested himself in the human project, and God will not fail. To understand that claim and all its ramifications—moral, cultural, economic, scientific, and political—is to understand the distinctive genius of the pontificate of John Paul II.

Yes, there are many other distinctions often remarked. His visiting 119 countries in more than eighty foreign trips; his mastery of the media and communicating through best-selling books; his World Youth Days in various parts of the world, gathering millions of young people yearning for lives of moral and spiritual grandeur; his determined efforts to "heal the memories" of history in Jewish-Christian relations and other connections where the pain of the past persists. All these facets of the pontificate, however, are part and parcel of the radical humanism of John Paul II. His is an emphatically Christian humanism, but it is no less universal for that. It is precisely because Christ is understood as the Word or *logos* informing all reality that the message of "Be not afraid!" comprehends everyone and everything.

Of course this teaching is not new. A pope can only help develop and expand upon truths contained in the Jewish-Christian story of salvation as recorded in the Bible and preserved in what is believed to be the divinely guided tradition of the Church. But in the two-thousand-year history of the Church, there have been few pontificates so energetic in the exercise of the teaching ministry. Consider the subjects treated in just some of John Paul's thirteen encyclicals: on Christian

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evangelization and world religions (*Redemptoris Missio*, 1990); on the dignity of the human person and the free economy in the free society (*Centesimus Annus*, 1991); on the nature of moral truth in a relativistic world (*Veritatis Splendor*, 1993); on "the culture of life" and threats to human dignity (*Evangelium Vitae*, 1995); on the unity of the Church and the unity of the world (*Ut Unum Sint*, 1995). And, of course, while the encyclicals are central, they are but a small part of the many other teaching initiatives of this pontificate, including the production of the monumental *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

This past October, the Pope issued a new encyclical, *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason), with this basic message: Be not afraid of human reason. The extended and rigorously reasoned argument is a ringing defense of philosophy and science. The document forcefully reiterates the Catholic position that there can be no conflict between faith and reason; all truths are finally one because God is one. This argument is posited against "postmodernism" and other philosophical fashions that deny the universality of truth, and against all forms of religious "fideism" that pit faith against reason or revelation against philosophy. John Paul calls on theologians to respect the rightful autonomy of philosophy, and upon philosophers to regain their nerve in addressing the ultimate questions of meaning—questions that in recent history have too often been consigned to the presumably nonrational realm of "religion." Only in this way, he contends, can science and technology, which threaten to turn against the human project, be brought back into the conversational circle of authentic humanism.

In these many teaching initiatives, John Paul has demonstrated himself to be "a man of the Council." His liberal critics, of whom there are many, have over the years accused of him of trying to roll back the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In fact, he is one of the few surviving participants in the Council. He was there and knows what it was about. Some claim that the Council called for a revolution of Catholicism in accommodating to the modern world. John Paul believes the Council calls for a renewal of Catholicism in challenging the modern world. Liberal dissenters will be with us for a while yet, but I believe that the twenty years of this pontificate ensure that the second position is prevailing and will prevail.

Shortly before he died in 1976, André Malraux said that the twenty-first century will be religious or it will not be at all. I believe that, at the edge of the third millennium, we are witnessing the desecularization of world history. I have been privileged over the years to get to know the Pope personally. Protocol requires that you not make public what you discuss with the Pope in private, but I asked for and received permission to tell this story.

Once over dinner we were discussing the surprising turns in history. We talked about how Voltaire, Diderot, and the *philosophes* of the militantly secular Enlightenment would be astonished at what is happening. They were dogmatically convinced that religion, and Catholicism most particularly, was the preeminent obstacle to enlightenment and progress. According to their creed, as people became more enlightened religion would inevitably wither away. And here we are two hundred years later, after the bloody utopias of militant secularism have been, as Marx might say, consigned to the dustbin of history, and the most comprehensive, coherent, and compelling vision of the human future—carrying the light of Israel to the nations—is proposed by the Catholic Church.

"Let's face it, Holy Father," I said half jokingly, "You are ahead of the curve of history." After some discussion of what is meant by "the curve of history," the Pope laughed and said, "Yes, yes, I am ahead of the curve of history. I was going so fast I broke my leg." After giving me permission to tell the story, he added in a more serious tone, "But you must tell them I will keep on going, and they must, too." I suppose it is possible that generations from now stories such as this might be told when, in a world less afraid, people recall humanity's debt to John Paul the Great.

FT

A SALUTARY REMINDER

We have often noted here Dr. Johnson's maxim that people need not so much to be instructed as to be reminded. Judge James L. Graham of the United States District Court recently reminded the ACLU, which certainly was in great need of reminding, of our government's deeply religious roots. In *American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio v. Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board*, the nation's loudest antireligious agitator, along with the help of a Presbyterian minister, once again fled to the protective bosom of the Religion Clause of the First Amendment. This time the particular offense was the inscription of Ohio's state motto, "With God All Things Are Possible," within the state seal that had been engraved in the granite Capitol Plaza in Columbus, Ohio.

The ACLU charged that this was clearly a prohibited endorsement of the Christian religion; the odd thing is, only the ACLU seemed to be aware of this fact. Newspaper reports from 1959, the year the motto was adopted, indicate that it was taken

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from Matthew 19:26, but its source was never cited in the legislative documents and is not displayed on the seal. Several "objective and reasonably informed" observers testified in court about the motto. A local senior rabbi could only say that the motto "sounded vaguely familiar"—not surprising, considering that a number of similar statements can be found in the Hebrew Bible (and the Quran too, for that matter). A professor of religious studies at Capital University testified that average college students would probably not be able to identify the motto's source, either. If average citizens in Columbus, Ohio, now recognize the motto as the words of Jesus, it is no doubt thanks to the fine work of the ACLU. Otherwise, there is obviously no cause for alarm about religiously preferential statements in public: the public is too religiously illiterate to pick up on them anyway.

Although the court ruled that the motto is compatible with any theistic religion, the state's apparent preference of religion to nonreligion constituted a further constitutional violation, according to the ACLU. But the court wisely ruled that acknowledging religion as a part of the fabric of society is a far cry from establishing a state religion and monitoring the citizens' adherence to it. Still, the dilemma of interpreting a Constitution rooted in both Christian and Enlightenment principles in a society that two hundred years later is increasingly religiously pluralistic presents no easy answers. Judge Graham expresses in his decision thoughts that by now should be quite familiar to our readers:

"The Justices of the Supreme Court disagree among themselves on the proper role of religion in public life and the extent of the Court's authority to decide these issues under the Establishment Clause. This debate is not merely an academic exercise. Indeed, the fundamental question is just what values may properly inform and mold the public policy of the nation. Will they be exclusively secular or will they include the values embodied in the nation's religious heritage? Some argue that the government's position must be one of strict neutrality. Others argue that in the realm of values, there is no such thing as neutrality. Indeed, it seems indisputable that the laws of every society reflect certain moral presuppositions. The law prohibits, allows, or promotes certain behaviors based upon what that society deems right or wrong. In America today, both sides of the debate on such divisive public issues as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and pornography are taking a distinct moral stance. Thus, the issue of the role of religion in public life is an important one which deserves the public's attention."

Those who doubt the essentially religious nature of the founding fathers and documents of the United States need only peruse the history surrounding them to discover otherwise. Judge Graham notes that the Declaration of Independence makes explict reference to a Creator (who is, ironically, the source of people's rights not to believe in him if they so choose). President Washington made a point of including prayer in his first inaugural address. The first Congress encouraged him also to declare "a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God"—and this on the very day that the language of the First Amendment was approved. This same Congress, in one of its earliest actions, chose chaplains for both houses to be paid out of public funds. The national motto, "In God We Trust," is engraved on the wall in the House of Representatives, and the Capitol building has a room reserved just for prayer. Since the founding of the nation, it has been customary for both national and state legislatures to open their sessions with prayer, and the oaths taken in court and by judges end with the words, "So help me God." Presidents have made a practice of calling the country to a National Day of Prayer each year, and the national anthem gives thanks for the nation's preservation by the hand of God. The list goes on and on. John Adams, the second President, said it best: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." Dr. Johnson was right about the importance of being reminded, and it is most welcome when the reminding comes from a federal judge who obviously understands that what should be obvious is today news to many.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ This is simply for the record. Every time I mention New York City's being the prolepsis of the New Jerusalem, it provokes a protest from a reader or two who wonders how we can live so deprived of "nature." Of human nature there is plenty, needless to say, but also of other kinds. For instance, I rather enjoy all the birds. Birds in Manhattan? You bet. Amy, who lives next door and is more avid about matters avian, gave me a list the other day of birds sighted this past year in our adjoining back yards: American robin, cardinal, purple finch, dark-eyed junco, black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, blue jay, house sparrow, field sparrow, starling, crow, pigeon, and mourning dove. Of tree-clinging birds there was the hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, and common flicker. And one day I saw a falcon, ravenously eating a mouse it had

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killed. I'm not trying to prove anything, mind you, but I wouldn't be surprised if that list compares quite favorably with the sightings of those who, for whatever strange reasons, deliberately live somewhere other than New York City.

■ It's been sending ideologists up the wall for decades, but Americans persist in not being upset by economic inequalities. Eighty percent continue to say that they are middle class and quite well-off, thank you. They don't think the rich are happier than they are, and wealth is way down the list of things that measure their idea of success in life. For a thorough examination of this phenomenon, including the pertinent survey research data, you might want to take a look at a recently published study, *Attitudes Toward Economic Inequality* by Everett Carll Ladd and Karlyn H. Bowman (American Enterprise Institute, 128 pp., $9.95 paper).

■ This I have from my friend Russell Hittinger. In the Museum of the Confederacy in New Orleans there is displayed a crown of thorns that was sent to Jefferson Davis by a sympathizer. Davis, who after the war was held in a Union prison without charges, had earlier tried, unsuccessfully, to enlist the support of the Vatican for the Southern cause. Pope Pius IX was himself besieged by liberal movements in Italy, and was inclined to identify with the besieged South. He wove the crown of thorns with his own hands and sent it to the imprisoned Davis with a note urging him to remember the sufferings of Christ, noting that just men frequently must suffer for the cause of justice. Politically incorrect, no doubt, but poignant.

■ A reader possessed of a perhaps terminal measure of individual creativity sends me the product of what he describes as three years of "Christian Research": "THE NEW REFORM THEOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH" (caps are his). He says the Catholics, Arminians, Calvinists, Lutherans, and others have got it all wrong. "I have revised the Nicene Creed, as set forth by the early Church leaders, to reflect the 'true sense and meaning' of Scriptures." "This New Reform Theology of the Christian Faith is THE WAY OF SALVATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY AND THE MILLENNIUM." Clearly, this is important. But it is the ending of the letter that I especially liked: "I just thought I would share this with you." Considering what is at stake, I should hope so.

■ There are difficulties, as mentioned last month, with Charles Frazier's novel *Cold Mountain*, but it does have its moments. Whether or not it was the author's intent, one incident nicely illustrates a problem with the "moral exemplar" theory of the atonement, namely, that the merit in Christ's death is in his setting us a noble example. The theory has no place for all that business about restitution, resurrection, and the such. Monroe, a refined Unitarian-type parson who for some reason has a mission to the backwoods folk of North Carolina, is telling the Jesus story to Esco, who asks at the end, "And what this fellow come down for was to save us?" Monroe says yes. "From our own bad natures and the like?" Yes again. "And they still done him like they did? Spiked him up and knifed him and all?" Yes indeed. "But you say this story's been passed around some hundred-score years?" Well, nearly. "A very long time," opines Esco. Then Frazier writes, "Esco grinned as if he had solved a puzzle and stood up and slapped Monroe on the shoulder and said, Well, about all we can do is hope it ain't so."

■ "In purely economic terms, children are an expensive investment," according to the United Nations Population Fund. Setting aside whether children can be looked at in purely economic terms, the fact remains that not having children is ultimately much more expensive. The current global demographics all point to rapidly declining birthrates matched by increasing numbers of people over the age of sixty. The older group is dependent on the younger for survival, whether by direct support within the family structure or indirectly by social security systems. The fewer young people to work and develop the globe's resources, the bleaker the picture looks for the elderly, and finally everyone else. Grandparents may be a more expensive investment than children, especially when there are no children to foot the bills. Thus one more connection between viewpoints that are anti-natal and pro-euthanasia.

■ Writing in *New Oxford Review*, John F. Quinn, professor of history at Salve Regina University in Newport, Rhode Island, devotes an article to the proposition that "the neoconservative Catholics" have undertaken a "dramatic change of direction." With specific reference to my own writing, he says that what was once enthusiasm "for all things American" and for an attendant "Catholic moment" has now given way to a much more grim assessment that is tantamount to "losing faith in America—its government, its culture, and its apathetic people." There is a smidgen of truth in most generalizations, and it is true that on even-numbered days I am sometimes less hopeful about the American experiment. But it is far from true that I have abandoned the argument or language of the "Catholic moment." In fact, just the other week I was in Prof. Quinn's Rhode Island vigorously advancing that thesis. The worse things get the more convinced I am of its truth, understanding of course that the Catholic moment is also the moment of opportunity and challenge for Protestants, Orthodox, Jews, and all who have not rejected the

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suspicion that there is discussible moral truth pertinent to the right ordering of personal and public life. Different accents, different tones, different responses to new occasions? Of course. But a "dramatic change of direction"? Hardly.

■ "Evangelicals and Catholics Together in Ireland." That movement, inspired by ECT in this country, was launched a few months ago, with J. I. Packer, a major participant in ECT here, helping with the launch. The ten-page manifesto of ECT-Ireland was signed by 130 clergy and lay leaders from Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Church of Ireland communities. Like the original ECT, the statement includes both theological affirmations and a clear statement of cultural tasks, emphasizing, as one might expect, the end of "sectarian murder, bitterness, hatred, and division." In Latin America, where tensions between Protestants and Catholics are also and quite literally explosive, ECT continues to be a meeting point in searching for greater unity in truth. In a forthcoming issue there will be more on an unprecedented meeting of Evangelicals and Catholics scheduled for this March in Quito, Ecuador.

■ The headline on the front page of the *New York Times* is "Christians Gain Support in Fight on 'Persecution.'" Putting the word persecution in quotes is a nice touch. One notes also the third-person-distant use of "Christians." You remember the Christians, don't you? An important, if marginal, group in America. Like about 90 percent of the population. Ms. Laurie Goodstein's story continues, coming close to the tone of the *Washington Post* report of a while back that described conservative Christians as poor, uneducated, and easily led. Says Ms. Goodstein of the Christians: "They are writing letters to countries —some whose names they cannot pronounce— demanding the release of Christian prisoners." Ms. Goodstein, some of whose sentences do not bear grammatical scrutiny, makes no effort to conceal her disdain for these religious rubes. One cannot imagine a *Times* story about any other group protesting some aspect of foreign policy—regarding the Middle East or South Africa, for instance— which would point out that some of the protestors are ignorant of pertinent details. Ms. Goodstein reports with relish that at a meeting on the persecution of Christians a woman "raised her hand and asked the speaker to please explain the difference between Muslim and Islam." Heh, heh, these people are really out of it. But then, just in case the more sophisticated readers of the *Times* might not get it, Ms. Goodstein adds in parentheses, "one is a person, the other a religion." A careful reading of this one report could provide grist for a volume on our current culture wars. The *Times* account belongs to an all too familiar genre. It is called the teaching of contempt, this time applied to Christians not of the liberal persuasion.

■ Life is short. Eternity is long. To judge by much contemporary preaching and devotional literature, one might conclude that the reverse is the case. At least that is the observation of people who say that they hear very little about the "last things"—death, judgment, Heaven, and Hell—in the Church these days. Why that should be the case is a subject for elaborate scholarly inquiry. Trying to do something about it is the important contribution of Jeffrey Burton Russell, who in the last two decades has given us books such as *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity; Satan: The Early Christian Tradition; Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages; Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World;* and *The Prince of Darkness: Evil and the Power of Good in History*. The books have been appreciatively reviewed, also in these pages, and now Russell has turned his scholarly attention to a very different subject (although not so different as one might think) with *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton University Press, 194 pp.). Possibly there is little preaching and teaching about Heaven because people don't know what to think about it, or whether it can be thought about, or whether there is a Heaven to think about. Moreover, such talk about Heaven as there is is often so sentimental and simplistic, or else caught up in New Ageish "spiritualities," that the subject has become a downright embarrassment. Russell, who is sure there is a Heaven to think about, makes clear that the contemporary Christian reticence about it is quite recent. Through the centuries the most rigorous systematizers, as well as the most adventuresome mystics, have had a great deal to say about Heaven, and nobody, in his judgment, said it better than Dante. Russell encourages us not to be intimidated by the fear that our talking about Heaven may be misunderstood; after all, it is beyond human understanding. If Heaven really is where we hope to be in eternity, we must talk and think about it.

■ The spokesman for Woodrow Wilson's university explains that "there is legitimate room for disagreement about how you decide what is moral and that it's not for us to hold to a particular set of values." Princeton offered the Ira W. DeCamp Professorship of Bioethics to Peter Singer, a very smart moral lunatic from Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, who is noted for championing with equal fanaticism the rights of animals and the rightness of eliminating unfit human beings, born and unborn. The problem with conventional ethics, says Mr. Singer, is that they are based on moral intutions, and "many of our considered moral intuitions are formed for selfish reasons, or for religious reasons which were once

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strong but are now outdated." The pleasure principle, he insists, should be the only norm that matters, and it's just too bad for those who do not share our pleasures or get in the way of the pleasure of the powerful. The university spokesman says that "experts in the field of ethics have been impressed with Mr. Singer." Very impressed indeed. In Germany, where people recall how eugenics and euthanasia can get out of hand, Peter Singer has been denied academic platforms. Princeton is more open-minded. It is not for them to hold to a particular set of values.

■ Father Joseph M. Connors, S.V.D., offers some advice both principled and wise about choosing where to engage in moral and public policy combat. One should choose, he says, "the principle of the right to life over the quality of life; the principle of subsidiarity, providing assistance only when it is needed; the principle of economy, or getting all the birds you can with one stone; the principle of comparative body count, with thousands more abortions in a day than executions in a year; the principle of focus, or not biting off more than you can chew; the principle of vocation or personal charism, letting everyone do what she does best and wants to do most; the principle of coalition, or accepting strange political bedfellows; the principle of buckling down to the harder and less popular issues rather than hopping on every bandwagon; the principle of putting at least as much effort into right to life as into justice-and-peace; and, finally, the principle of the cardinal virtue of prudence, or simply the overriding principle of informed and inspired common sense, which embraces all the others." (For more information on Fr. Connors' "Consistent/Consecutive Ethic of Life," please write to him at P.O. Box 6000, Techny, IL 60082-6000.)

■ Every so often the media commentariat gets together and declares another Year of the Woman—for instance, when Geraldine Ferraro received the Democratic nomination for Vice President in 1984, her last good day in politics. Now Gail Collins, editorial writer for our parish bulletin, examines "Why the Women Are Fading Away." At present there are fewer rather than more women in national politics, and fewer still within reach of real leadership influence. In searching for an explanation, Ms. Collins blames "the mommy detour" (women selfishly taking time out for their children), the "guilt by association" factor (women treated meanly by wicked men who were supposed to help them), and pressure for "campaign finance reform" (which threatens the feminist Emily List that raises big bucks for the liberally orthodox). But then she gets to a more believable reason. "The abortion issue has always been a rallying point for the women-in-politics movement, but it's also a problem. Some of the staunchest abortion-rights advocates will admit that the issue sometimes overshadows everything else, giving the public the idea that women are one-note candidates. 'There's this perception that women's groups are focused entirely on choice,' says Ruth Messinger, the recent New York mayoral candidate. 'It's hard to get voters to understand that a higher percentage of women means more day care and better HMO's.'" It is true that women who defend to the death the right to partial-birth abortion, more accurately known as infanticide, do seem a touch extremist. But Ms. Messinger's notion that that impression would be offset by a recognition that these candidates also favor government-run medicine and expanding the government school system to include children in the cradle suggests that the problem is not women but dumb ideas that feminism has identified as "women's issues" and imposed on female candidates who, in many instances, no doubt know better.

■ The elderly sick, especially toward the very end of their lives, consume an inordinate amount of scarce medical resources. That is one argument commonly, although usually in muted form, advanced in favor of doctor-assisted suicide. The evidence is examined in a long article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* ("What Are the Potential Cost Savings from Legalizing Physician-Assisted Suicide?") by Ezekiel J. Emanuel and Margaret Battin. Their conclusion: "Drawing on data from the Netherlands on the use of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide and on available U.S. data on costs at the end of life, this analysis explores the degree to which the legalization of physician-assisted suicide might reduce health care costs. The most reasonable estimate is a savings of $627 million, less than 0.07 percent of total health care expenditures. What is true on a national scale is also likely to be reflected in the potential savings for individual managed-care plans. Physician-assisted suicide is not likely to save substantial amounts of money in absolute or relative terms, either for particular institutions or for the nation as a whole."

■ Some years ago I had a friendly correspondence with a *New York Times* columnist who regularly used "righteous" as an adjective of denigration. For instance, she would criticize "righteous political leaders." I suggested that surely she meant "self-righteous," to which she responded that righteous and self-righteous are today synonymous. I thought of this again when working on a Sunday homily. The text was Luke 18, and the New American Bible (NAB), which is, regrettably, the most widely used in Catholic parishes, renders verse 9 this way: "Jesus spoke this parable addressed to those who believed in their own self-righteousness while holding every one else in contempt." The KJV, RSV, NIV, and other standard English translations all speak of those who trust in their own righteousness, correctly

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translating the Greek *dikaioi*. It is of more than passing interest that the NAB translators seem to agree with the above-mentioned columnist that righteousness today means self-righteousness. Rome's response to the joint declaration with the Lutherans on justification by faith emphasized the need to find fresh language with which to communicate the good news of justification in contemporary culture. The need is highlighted by the NAB treatment of Luke 18:9. Presumably we do not want to say that the sinner is justified in appropriating by faith the self-righteousness of Christ. Behind this apparently small linguistic quibble is a larger cultural shift in which necessary distinctions are erased in a process of denigrating any appeal to the normative. Righteousness becomes self-righteousness, a moral argument becomes a moralistic argument, and reference to objective truth is absolutism. Although it goes largely unnoticed, it is a change in language that changes how people think. Of course the ideologues of relativism know perfectly well what they are doing, and feel very righteous about it—as in "self-righteous." It must immediately be said that this is not to suggest that the NAB translators are part of a conspiracy. The deficiencies of that hapless translation can be explained quite satisfactorily in terms of insouciance toward the original text, deafness to verbal grace and clarity, and easy acquiescence in cultural drift. The parties responsible for the NAB should not be accused of more than they are guilty.

■ The Institute for American Values (IAV) has just released a study on how widely used high school health textbooks deal with matters of marriage, family, and sexuality. Written by NYU psychologist Paul Vitz, the study offers good news and bad news. The good news is that these high school textbooks are remarkably positive towards marriage and family—a far cry from their college-level counterparts. They emphasize the supreme importance of spouses to one another and the permanent nature of the marital relationship. They urge students to recognize the maturity required to make a marriage work, and the necessity of going beyond mere romantic infatuation to seek out more valuable qualities in a mate. Sexual abstinence is advocated as the best preparation for marriage. And the destructiveness of divorce is openly acknowledged, even while treading lightly in consideration of student readers who are the children of divorce. That's the good news. The bad news is that these textbooks are boring. Everything good in life is encapsulated by the concept of health—marriage and green vegetables are good for your health, divorce and heroin are bad for your health. Health may be appealing, but it's not morally compelling, and worse yet it's not terribly interesting. It's a sad achievement to make the issues of most urgent interest to teens—like love and sex—as dull as oatmeal. The only spice the authors of the textbooks can find to liven things up a bit is "self-esteem," which functions as the religious undergirding to the doctrine of health. But it should be painfully clear by now that the individualistic pursuit of one's own self-fulfillment and absolute self-esteem cannot make a marriage work. Even more fundamentally, the direct pursuit of self-esteem never results in self-esteem, only self-centeredness. IAV, thankfully, has some suggestions to build on the good, if obscured, impulses in health education. It needs, first of all, to break out of its narrow intellectual world of medicine and psychology to examine the contributions of other fields, like history, anthropology, and philosophy. Secondly, the banal notion of "health" would be profitably expanded to the morally richer concept of "character," which would develop virtues to bring students out of themselves. And thirdly, these textbooks should simply be more interesting—and the best way to do that is to draw on the rich traditional heritage at our disposal, to hear what "novelists, poets, painters, sculptors, and filmmakers . . . philosophers, historians, and anthropologists" have to say about this eminently interesting subject.

■ Whoever would have guessed that the incorrigible deconstructionist Stanley Fish thinks abortion is wrong? And not only does he think it wrong, he also thinks the logic of the pro-choice side is both flawed and flimsy. And all it took was a little prodding from Princeton's Robert George for him to come out. George challenged Fish during a debate sponsored by the American Political Science Association over the pro-choice claim to have science on its side. Fish immediately conceded, "Professor George is right. And he is right to correct me," to the astonishment of all present. "I should have known better," Fish said later. "Pro-life arguments are now based on scientific evidence and the pro-choice arguments are not. That is a cultural, historical fact." He recognizes the irony of the intellectual role reversal in the abortion debate: "Nowadays, it is pro-lifers who make the scientific question of when the beginning of life occurs the key one in the abortion controversy, while pro-choicers want to transform the question into a 'metaphysical' or 'religious' one by distinguishing between mere biological life and 'moral life.' . . . Until recently pro-choicers might have cast themselves as defenders of rational science against the forces of ignorance and superstition, but when scientific inquiry started pushing back the moment when significant life (in some sense) begins, they shifted tactics and went elsewhere in search of rhetorical weaponry." Although Fish openly opposes so-called abortion rights, he's still hesitant

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to call himself pro-life. One step at a time.

■ When a country has 120 males for every 100 females, big trouble lies ahead. That is among the points Nicholas Eberstadt makes in his survey of population trends in East Asia. Writing in the *National Interest*, he notes that China's "grotesque One Child Policy" has led to a resurgence of the age-old practice of female infanticide. South Korea will, according to experts, surpass the 120/100 ratio by the year 2010. Sex-selective abortion is the big factor there. "Unless bachelorhood suddenly becomes much more socially acceptable in East Asia," Eberstadt writes, "both China and South Korea are poised to experience an increasingly intense, and perhaps desperate, competition among young men for their country's limited supply of brides." A Chinese scholar predicts an enormous increase in sexual crimes such as "forced marriages, girls stolen for wives, bigamy, visiting prostitutes, rape, adultery, homosexuality, and weird sexual habits." Eberstadt concludes that the sex imbalance in East Asia is an "irremediable problem" that is already in place, with the full consequences inevitably exploding in the years ahead. And to think that the global campaign for coercive population control and abortion is led by those who call themselves feminists.

■ It may merely have been carelessness, or perhaps someone at the *Rockland Journal News* in Illinois really has an attitude. The picture accompanying the story on the recent encyclical, *Fides et Ratio,* bears the caption: "Pope John Paul II signs the yadda yadda yesterday."

■ It's not easy to stay on the right side of the law when they keep changing the rules. In recent years federal courts have ruled that Christmas displays on government property are permissible if they are not significantly religious. The way to ensure that is to put into the display enough Santa Clauses, reindeer, peppermint sticks, and other kitsch to send a clear signal that the whole thing is constitutionally safe because it is seasonal and not spiritual—at least not seriously so. This past Christmas in Montreal, however, there was a different problem. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul wanted to hold a parade downtown that would promote giving food and money to help the poor. The merchants of that fair city were greatly upset, since they already sponsor two commercial Christmas parades and feared the competing appeal to charity. The wise men of the city council finally hit upon a compromise. St. Vincent de Paul could have its parade so long as it does not include Santa Claus or other nonreligious symbols of the season. Apparently the perceived secularization of Montreal is such that the merchants assume that the Christ Child poses a less serious threat of competition than Santa Claus. They may be right about that, but given the choice, the Montreal rule is to be preferred over the rule imposed by our federal courts.

■ A reader writes that she "can hardly wait for [my] response to Andrew Sullivan." I'm sorry to disappoint, but I really don't have that much of a response. In a cover article in the *New York Times Magazine* ("Going Down Screaming"), Sullivan claims that conservative intellectuals have taken a "Puritanical" turn and have become the scolds of a supposedly decadent America. Their extremism is evident in their challenging what Sullivan calls "the post-1960s settlement" on matters moral and cultural. The chief culprits in his screed are the *Weekly Standard* and this journal, which he calls "the spiritual nerve center of the new conservatism." "Spiritual nerve center" I'll buy, but I don't recognize FT in his "new conservatism." The nasty edge of Sullivan's attack is evident in, inter alia, his insinuation that FT is somehow anti-Jewish. He notes that an October 1997 statement of religious leaders published in FT included no Jewish signers. He failed to note that the statement is titled: "We Hold These Truths: A Statement of Christian Conscience and Citizenship." It would not do to ask Jews to sign an explicitly Christian statement. In fact, there is no publication in America, and probably in the world, that devotes more serious attention to Jewish-Christian relations than FT. I expect Mr. Sullivan is aware of that. There is another important factor. Sullivan is best known for his advocacy of same-sex marriage and the moral acceptance of homosexuality. This is key to his understanding of "the settlement" that some of us question. (In addition to the double entendre of his title, the article includes more than twenty references to homosexuality in his polemic against what he terms "the anti-gay crusade.") By comparison, Sullivan, who says he is a very serious Catholic, can find nothing more to say about abortion than that it is a "difficult and divisive issue." Mr. Sullivan is a very capable and very partisan writer who is not above using any stick with which to beat his perceived opponents. But I will stop there, lest it seem I have more of a response than I said.

■ The fall issue of *Christianity and the Arts*, an ecumenical quarterly, is devoted to "Hidden Treasures of the Church: Arts by Catholic Nuns." Attention is paid to today's nuns, but mainly it evokes the beauty and creativity of religious communities that are, in too many cases, now on the edge of extinction. For a one-year subscription, at $21, write the quarterly at P.O. Box 118088, Chicago, IL 60611.

■ I confess to having been a big fan for a long time, going back to *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* in 1965. The 1970 devastation of

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what would come to be called political correctness and the class conflicts swirling around it, *Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers,* probably mugged a lot of liberals into neoconservatism. And in 1987 *The Bonfire of the Vanities* served up a wickedly accurate depiction of life in New York City at the top and the bottom. When, therefore, Tom Wolfe's huge new novel, *A Man in Full,* appeared, I knew I would just have to make time for it. I will still look forward to almost anything that Tom Wolfe writes, but the book is a big disappointment on several scores. Not that it isn't laugh-out-loud funny at some points. Wolfe still occasionally tips his hand as the master entertainer. And his assiduous attention to detail provides a couple of harrowing chapters, one on the onerous labor of "pickers" in a freezer of a huge food warehouse, and the other on race, violence, and sex in a state prison. *A Man in Full* is centered in Atlanta, and some rave reviews say it does for Atlanta what *Bonfire* did for New York. The problem is that it does pretty much the same thing. There are endless pages of detail on the lifestyle of the very rich who are caught up in cultural and political tensions with transplanted Al Sharptons who manipulate the grievances of the black underclass. It seems almost nobody lives outside the realms of the sumptuous and the slums. Nobody goes to church in Atlanta, except blacks who apparently enjoy being used by hustler preachers in league with rogue politicians. Otherwise, the only appearance of religion comes with a nice young man who is most implausibly a "born-again Stoic" and becomes an evangelist for the Church of Zeus. The weak ending of the novel, which is more collapse than denouement, requires not simply suspended disbelief but unconditional surrender of one's critical faculties. Throughout, the social and economic minutiae picked up by Wolfe's keen powers of observation invite the reader to believe that this is the inside story about the very rich and very poor in Atlanta, and in America, at the end of this crazy century. And there is a lot of inside stuff scathingly related, especially with respect to the rich, but it is as far from suggesting the story in full as Charlie Croker (the central figure) is far from being *A Man in Full.* Except for the young born-again Stoic, almost all the many cut-out characters that Wolfe puts on stage represent pitiably empty lives. It is unkind, and just a little cheap, to so relentlessly hold them up to ridicule; and long before one gets to the end of seven hundred pages of sustained mockery, one realizes it is no longer very funny. It took Tom Wolfe ten years to write *A Man in Full.* He is now almost seventy, and one has to hope it will not take so long for him to produce another and better book.

■ So what do teachers think they're doing? My friend Robert Bertram sent out a letter to friends, reflecting on his fifty years of teaching theology at various Lutheran schools, including my alma mater, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. (I should note that the letter arrived as the Yankees were finishing up a season that met with the approval of even such fanatical fans as managing editor Matthew Berke.) Bertram writes: "Teachers are not in business to hit home runs. Our goal is RBIs. We are not soloists. Our students are already on base. We bat behind them and, if we succeed at all, we help drive them in. We score only as they come across home plate. What's more, if you've been teaching as long as I have, something else wonderful happens. (Notice, by the way, that to have taught for fifty years says nothing about whether the teaching was any good. As Peter Mead recently reminded me, 'Our Lord, after all, brought it off in just three years.') But when you have taught long, the runners whom you once batted in are now far enough along to bat you in. Former students, like your own kids when they grow up, become your teachers in turn. Again and again I'm experiencing that blessing: students who teach me every bit as much as I may have taught them, students to whom I may have delivered the Message but who believe it more boldly, more cheerfully, more sacrificially than I. In fact, that's what you have just been doing with your recent encouragements, advancing this poky runner toward home. That, I count all joy."

■ The Society of Christian Philosophers (SCP) is twenty years old, and Alvin Plantinga of Notre Dame offers some thoughts on it all. When SCP started, there was an American Catholic Philosophical Association but nothing for Protestants. Plantinga, then at Calvin College, and six others thought it was worth giving the idea a whirl, and twenty years later SCP, now thoroughly ecumenical, has more than a thousand members, and a rapidly growing number of younger members. It is all very encouraging indeed. Along the way, Plantinga suggests the action today is on the religion-and-science front, especially in conversation with biology. As Darwinism and other materialistic accounts of reality come under stronger criticism, and as the rigorously scientific support for such accounts are increasingly recognized to be very shaky indeed, Plantinga notes that the faith commitments, so to speak, of many in the scientific world are becoming more and more overt. He cites Harvard biologist Richard Lewontin, writing in the *New York Review of Books.* It's a quote worth clipping for use when next the conversation turns to religion and science: "Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science *in spite of* its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite*

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of the tolerance of the scientific community of unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a *prior commitment, a commitment to materialism*. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door. The eminent Kant scholar Lewis Beck used to say that anyone who could believe in God could believe in anything. To appeal to an omnipotent deity is to allow that at any moment the regularities of nature may be ruptured, that Miracles may happen."

■ Of the reasons for subscribing to this journal there is no end. The following is from W. Bradford Wilcox, former editor in chief of the lively journal *regeneration quarterly*: "I also wanted to write you to let you know you can offer a new pitch for subscribing to FIRST THINGS: romance. I first laid eyes on my wife while she was reading FIRST THINGS at the University of Virginia library. I was immediately intrigued. It's not often that one spies an attractive blonde keenly pouring over the most intelligent guide to religion and public life. Over the next few months, I kept seeing her in the periodicals room reading FIRST THINGS. Eventually, I screwed up the courage to ask a mutual friend to set us up on a blind date. A little more than three years after our first date, Danielle and I were married. (We recently celebrated our third anniversary.)" Of course, we cannot guarantee that all encounters of the FT kind will lead to such momentous consequences. A gift subcription, for instance, might only solidify a friendship. But that is no little thing.

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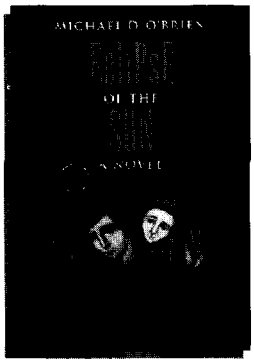

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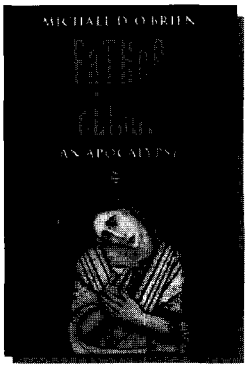

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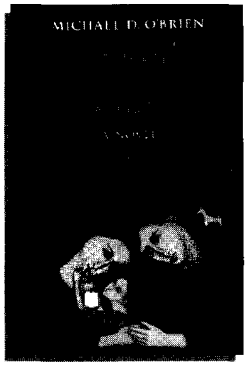

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